FB
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1-8

バカとテストと召喚獣6.5

井上堅二
Kenji Inoue

ファミ通文庫

井上堅二
Kenji Inoue

今回はついに優子姉さんが登場です！　初めて名前が出てから、気がつけば約二年半。最初から名前がついていて、それ以降も台詞も出番もきちんとあったのに、何故かビジュアル化されなかった可哀想な女の子。いやはや。本当に可哀想ですよね。だって、後から登場してロクに出番のなかったはずの学園長は、既にセミヌードまで披露しているっていうのに……。

葉賀ユイ
Yui Haga

随所にガタがきている廃車寸前の絵描き。来年にはオーバーホールをと目論んでいるものの、その前にオシャカになりそうな気配がプンプン。そしたら即スクラップですよ！　健康も失ってから大切さに気がつくものですね。井上さんや読者の皆さんはどうかご自愛ください。特に歯は大切ですよ！

カバーイラスト　葉賀ユイ

ファミ通文庫

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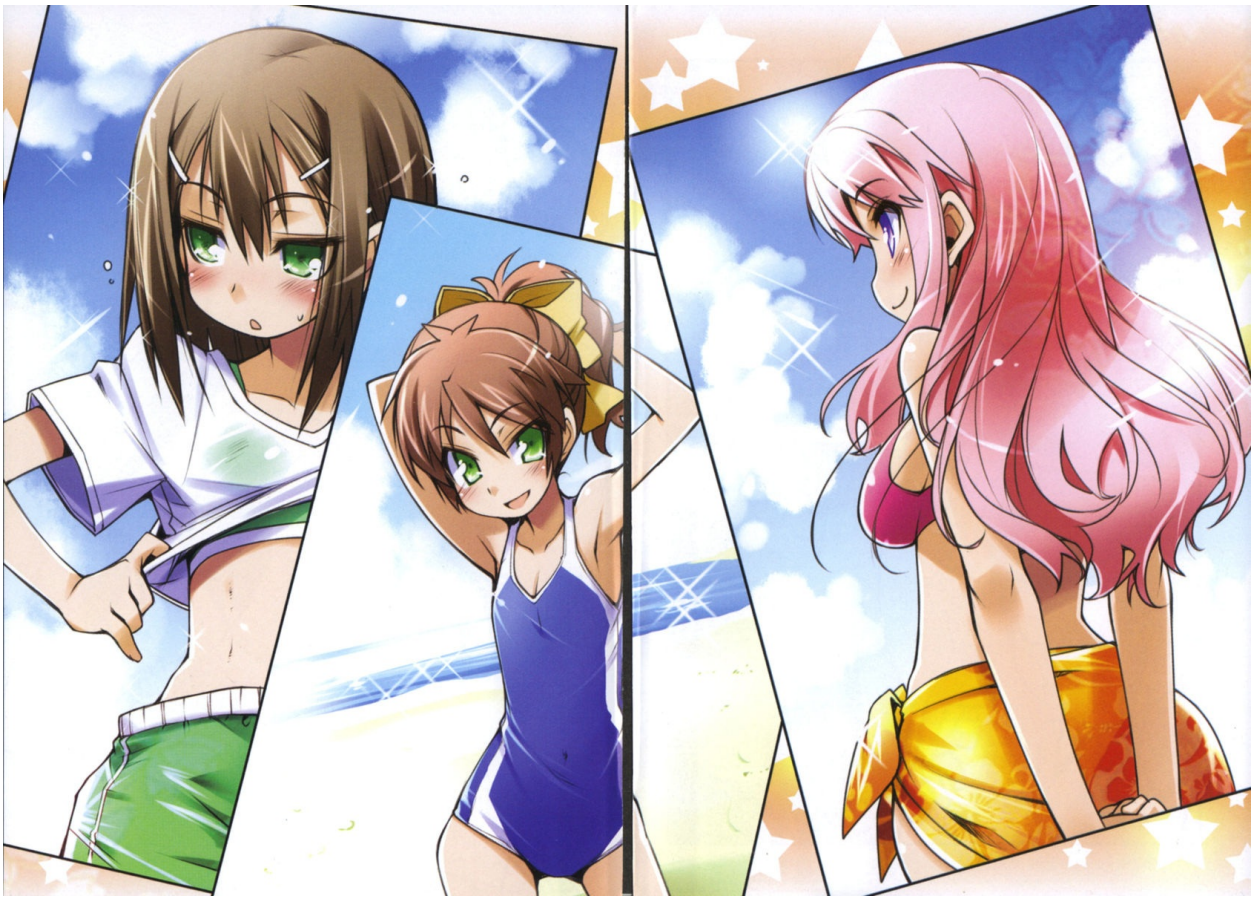
ついに登場！ 秀吉の姉・優子がFクラスに!? 『アタシと愚弟とクラス交換』、夏休みはみんなで海にバカンスだ！ 衝撃シーン満載の『僕と海辺とお祭り騒ぎ』前後編、神童と呼ばれていた少年と物静かな少女、二人の学校生活で起こった小さな事件『雄二と翔子と幼い思い出』の4本で贈る、青春エクスプロージョンショートストーリー集第2弾！ 「……？ 何故だか男として扱われた記憶がないのじゃが……!?」（by 比較的胸が小さい方の木下）

井上堅二の著作リスト

- バカとテストと召喚獣
- バカとテストと召喚獣2
- バカとテストと召喚獣3
- バカとテストと召喚獣3.5
- バカとテストと召喚獣4
- バカとテストと召喚獣5
- バカとテストと召喚獣6
- バカとテストと召喚獣6.5

I HEAR YOU HAVE NEW WORKS?
...MY PRIZED WORKS.
バカとテスト召喚獣 6.5
～ムッツリ商会の苦悩の巻～
HEH... CAN I SEE THEM?
コク..



...OF COURSE
FM... ANY OTHERS?
ANY MORE?
...JUST THESE LEFT.

BOUGHT!
……

... RECENTLY IT'S HARD TO PREDICT THE SELLING TREND.
I'LL BUY ALL OF SHIMADA MINAMI'S PHOTOS.

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協力：文月学園新聞部

バカとテストと召喚獣 6.5

文月新聞

【広告】

キミの若い力を学校平和の為に役立ててみないか？

我々FFF団は、Fクラスの――文月学園全体の秩序を守る為、若い力を募集しています。

この学園の平和を保つという崇高な目的へと、共に邁進していきませんか。

文月新聞　××××年××月××日

業務内容

自らの強い想いや感情を鈍器真心に乗せて
相手に叩き付けるだけの簡単なお仕事です。
使用する業務機器の種類も豊富。
勿論持参も大歓迎！
初心者の方もご安心。
優しい先輩が懇切丁寧に指導します。

給　与

月給：**1AP**（現物支給）
なんと、5APで1HPと交換可能！
更に能力に応じた歩合給も！！
詳しくは実際にお問い合わせ下さい。

※AP=Akichan Photograph
HP=Hideyoshi Photograph

24時間受付中!!　ご連絡は2-F須川亮まで。
携帯番号：080-○×△□-◇●▼□

～いつもあなたの真後ろに～
協賛 **ムッツリ商会**

【彼女をよく知る人々へのインタビュー】

クラスメイトの
Y井A久さん

『とにかくショックでした』

Y井さんは一言だけそう言うと、あとは押し黙ってしまった。未確認情報ではあるが、実はY井さんはS田さんに少なからず異性の魅力を感じているフシがあるとか。そう考えると彼はS田さんを巡る争いにおいてチンパンジー氏に負けてしまったことになる。未だ逆転の目は消えてはいないものの、その価値観のあまりの違いにショックは隠し切れないだろう。奇しくも彼はS田さんの隠れファンの気持ちを代弁したことになる。

【彼女をよく知る人々へのインタビュー】

自称【S田さんの恋人】
S水M春さん

『絶対に認めません。あの豚野郎であればまだしも、猿ごときにお姉様を譲るなど言語道断です。そもそもお姉様には美春という恋人がいるのにそのような疑惑が持ち上がるというだけで噴飯ものです。美春以外の誰がお姉様のペッタンコに触れるというのですか』

S水さんは終始その調子で怒り心頭のご様子。彼女にとってこのニュースは神経を逆なでする以外の何ものでもなかったのだろう。尚、彼女がS田さんの恋人であるという事実は新聞部としても確認できていない。

【チンパンジーみたいな人へのインタビュー】

残念ながら想い人であるチンパンジー氏の詳細を掴みきれなかった為、我々は彼に類似するであろう人にインタビューを行った。

チンパンジーの相似形
N村S一教諭

『貴様ら良い度胸だな』

インタビューの趣旨を説明した我々に対して彼は一言そう呟くと、インタビュアー全員を拘束して補習室へと去っていった。本記者は偶然にも所用で遅れて参加した為に辛うじて難を逃れることに成功した。この件に関してのこれ以上のインタビューは困難を窮めるため、断念することにした。

【お悔やみ申しあげます】

●2-E　矢野武雄
（新聞部所属インタビュアー）
S田M波さんに取材中、全身の関節を逆に曲げられる事故に遭う

●2-B　井川健吾
（新聞部所属インタビュアー）
前記矢野氏と同様の事故

●2-B　小野　明
（新聞部所属インタビュアー）
N村教諭へのインタビュー以降行方不明

他、新聞部数名

姫路瑞希の簡単3分クッキング

文目新聞

今日は
“あの人の舌もとろけちゃう特製☆肉じゃが”
を作っちゃいます♪

【材料 ～4人前～】

・じゃがいも	4個
・牛肉	200グラム
・たまねぎ	1個
・しょうゆ	大さじ4
・砂糖	大さじ3
・食塩	小さじ1
・硫酸	45cc
・硝酸カリウム	適量
・クロロ酢酸	お好み

【コラム】

防腐剤によく使われているので、入れたら美味しさ長持ち☆

隠し味に酸味のある酢酸を少し。クロロ酢酸のγ型は融点が53℃だから、冷ましたら固形化します。酸っぱいのが嫌いな人には冷ましてから結晶を取り除いてあげたらオッケー♪
相手の好みに合わせた気遣いでポイントアップかも？

【作り方】

❶たまねぎ・じゃがいもの皮を剥き、それぞれ適量に切り分けます。

❷お鍋に油をひいて、先にたまねぎを少し炒めます。

❸たまねぎが少し透明になったら、今度は切り分けた牛肉とじゃがいもを加えてさらに炒めます。

❹程よく炒めたら、更にお水・お砂糖・しょうゆ・お塩を入れて
煮込みます。

❺全体的に煮汁の色が均一になったら硫酸45ccを加えます。

じゃがいもに含まれるデンプン$(C_6H_{10}O_5)n$は
硫酸を加えて煮込むと加水分解を起こして
単糖類になって甘みを増すのでオススメ☆

❻一煮立ちさせたら一旦火を止めて、クロロ酢酸と硝酸カリウムを
入れてお鍋をかき混ぜてから、もう一度強火で煮込みましょう

この時、材料の関係でお鍋の金属部分が溶け始めてしまいます。
お鍋の底に穴が開くと煮汁がなくなっちゃうので、
その前に手早く調理を済ませてね♪

❼火を止めて、お鍋に残った溶液を専門業者に連絡して処分して
もらったら完成です。絶対に台所に流してはダメですよ。
お料理を作る人の最低限のマナーです。
この肉じゃがで、あの人の舌も♥もトロトロ間違いなし☆

文月学園新聞部が送る豆知識

《この製法における化学反応》

①$NaCl$ + $CH_2ClCOOH$ → $CH_2ClCOONa$ + HCl
食塩　クロロ酢酸　クロロ酢酸ナトリウム　塩酸

②KNO_3 + H_2SO_4 → HNO_3 + $KHSO_4$
硝酸カリウム　硫酸　硝酸　硝酸水素カリウム

③塩酸 + 硝酸 → 王水☠

☠**《王水とは》** 硫酸・塩酸よりも強力な、人体に対して極めて有害な酸。
“あの人の舌”どころか骨髄までも溶かします。

姫路瑞希さん及び周囲の試食者は特別な訓練を受けています。
危険ですので、一般の方は決して真似することのないようお願い致します。

文月新聞

【校内政治】
【地域経済】

最上級―最下級クラス両代表の婚約を発表

～試召戦争の遺恨残さず～

如月ハイランドの記念写真撮影にて仲睦まじい姿を披露する霧島翔子さん（写真左）と坂本雄二氏（同右）

近頃オープンしたという如月ハイランドにて、文月学園第二学年Aクラス代表の霧島翔子さん（16）と同Fクラス代表の坂本雄二氏（16）の婚約写真が開示された。両氏は本年度開始直後に勃発した試召戦争の対戦クラス代表同士であり、両クラスの級友間には遺恨もあったはずだが、この婚姻によって完全に両クラス間の和議が成立したと言える。先日上位であるはずのDクラスがFクラスに試召戦争を仕掛けたという上下逆転の話もあった為、この和議は学年の平穏に一役買うことになるだろう。尚、最上級クラスと最下級クラスの代表同士の婚姻は文月学園創設以来初の出来事。

地域経済の活性化に予想外の〝幸せの報せ〟

写真を開示した如月グループの発表によると、両氏は結婚可能な年齢になり次第同グループ経営の『如月グランドホテル・鳳凰の間』（通称：鯖の味噌煮）にて結婚式を執り行うとのこと。グループ関係者も「当園にイらしタ方ノ結婚とハ喜ばシイ限りデース。心ヨりお祝イ申し上げマース」と、この微笑ましいニュースに終始顔を綻ばせていた。また、「実は坂本雄二氏はこの婚約を受け入れていないという噂があるが」という我々の質問に対しては「ソンなコトはアり得ません。余計なコトを聞クようナらアナタの家に牛乳ヲ染み込マせテ一週間経っタ雑巾を送り付ケまスよ」と冗談で応対。新規オープンにはつきものの〝ネガティブキャンペーン〟の一部

としてとらえているようだ。如月グループは彼らの結婚を祝し、全面的にその式をバックアップする方針であるとのこと。学生同士の結婚ということで経済面に苦しむ彼らを助けようという、大企業ならではの小粋なはからいだ。また同ハイランドには彼ら以外の結婚報告も続々と届いているとのことで、グループとしては思わぬ〝縁結び効果〟という嬉しい誤算が生じたようだ。これを受けて、今後同グループは如月ハイランドをアミューズメントパークのみならず〝男女の関係が進展する憩いの場〟としても展開していく方針だ。地域経済の活性化につながるとして付近の住民もこれに積極的に協力していく構えを見せている。不況の影が見え隠れする中、坂本雄二氏と霧島翔子さんの婚姻はまさに〝幸せの報せ〟と言えるだろう。

疑問の残る終戦処理に情報開示の呼び声も

一方で、文月学園第二学年の生徒間ではこの婚姻には裏があるという噂も流れている。これは学年最優秀生徒でありながら見目麗しくスポーツ万能、由緒正しい家柄の霧島翔子さんに対して、成績不良、ブサイク、学習態度最低という坂本雄二氏が釣り合っていないという点が原因のようだ。また彼らが第一学年の頃から言われている「霧島さんは女子生徒に興味があり、男は嫌いである」という話もこの噂に一役買っているのだろう。件の坂本雄二氏は先の試召戦争でも「相手に何らかの条件を呑ませることで設備入れ替えを見逃す」という手法を用いており、実は試召戦争に負けたAクラスが代表の身を差し出すことで設備入れ替えを逃れたのではないか、との見方もある。

この件を受けて文月学園試召戦争管理委員会は「事実であれば由々しき事態だ。この上なく羨ましい」と厳しい姿勢を取っており、近日中には事実関係確認の為に情報開示を呼びかける方向も検討中とのこと。このようなクラスメイトを疑われるという事態に対してFクラス異端審問会は「事実関係などどうでも良い。まずは処刑の方法を議論すべきではないか」と、情報開示要求に難色を示している。事実関係の確認にはしばらくの時間がかかりそうだ。坂本雄二氏と霧島翔子さんの小学校のクラスメイトであった方の話によると、両氏の関係は小学校から続いているらしく、その間柄は幼なじみということになる。当時は〝神童〟と呼ばれていた坂本氏が今のような人物に変わってしまったことも含め、彼らの小学校時代には何らかのトラブルがあったものと考えられる。

【特別コラム掲載延期のお詫び】

須川 亮の特別講座
〝ファーストキスの守り方 ～16年間守り続けたオレの伝説～〟
は諸般の事情により掲載が無期延期となりました。

先号の掲載予定
〝俺は振られたわけじゃない。俺が認めなければ振られていない〟
の不掲載と併せて心よりお詫び申し上げます。

尚、今後のコラムについても掲載予定は未定となります。

Fumizuki News (Advertisements)

Job Scope

It is a simple job, which requires only one to strike their opponents through one's strong thoughts and feelings placed upon their blunt sincerity.
There would also be plenty of machinery and tools that can be used for the job.
Of course, we strongly welcome all who wish to take up this task!
Beginners too, can feel at ease.
The kind seniors will cordially and politely provide guidance.

Allowance

Monthly allowance: 1AP (Allowance given in kind)
However, it is possible to exchange 5AP for 1 HP!
Furthermore, in response to one's abilities, commission shall also be provided!!
Please make inquiries should more details be needed.

※AP=Akichan Photograph
HP=Hideyoshi Photograph

Available 24 hours a day!!

Please contact Sugawa Ryou of Class 2F.
Contact Number:
080-○×△□-◇●▼□

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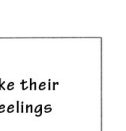
Supported by the
Muttsulini Company.



Come, young ones!

Recruiting membere!!

文月新聞

With the strength of your youth,
would you not try to be useful?
For the sake of school peace,

We are the FFF Brigade, of Class F --- In order to protect the entirety of Fumizuki Academy's order, we are recruiting, the strength of youth.

Why don't we push forward together, towards the sublime goal of keeping up the peace within this school?

Fumizuki News XXXX Year XX Month XX Day

Come, young ones!

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- **Please contact Sugawa Ryou of Class 2F.**
- **Contact Number: 080-????-????**

Supported by the Muttsulini Company. ~Always right behind you ~

AKIHISA YOSHII

Me and My Stupid Brother and a Switch of Classrooms

アタシと愚弟とクラス交換

“—That’s how it is. I hope to film a promotional movie of Fumitzuki Academy through A class. What do you think, Takahashi-sensei?”

“Yes, principal. I have no reasons to object.”

“Well, this really helps me out a lot. It’s because of those idiots messing around recently that our Fumitzuki Academy’s rating has been falling down the slope…”

“I’ve kind of realized that.”

“Oh yes, I’m thinking of having a few students from A class perform in this. What do you think about it? Who should I choose to perform?”

“In that case…I think it will be more appropriate to choose the valedictorian Kirishima Shouko-san and the vice-valedictorian Kubo Yoshimitsu-san to lead the performance. However, the unfortunate thing is that both of them are not very sociable and don’t really talk much.”

“Kukuku. It’s unexpected of you to say that.”

“I’m just stating an objective view. I do know that I am not very affable after all, so I’m more familiar with such a thing.”

“Oh my. Are you angry? I’m sorry to you then. Please carry on.”

“No…if we’re talking about a student who has outstanding grades, is hardworking, and is very lively—I feel that Kinoshita Yuuko would be a fine choice for the lead in this clip.”

“Fm fm, so she’s the only candidate you choose? Are there no other students you’ll choose?”

“We do have other choices, but there will be some accompanying risks.”

“Risks?”

“Yes. For example, our class has a student like Kudou Aiko who has outstanding grades too and is very outgoing…”

“Yes.”

“But with her as the lead in this, we might have to check on which words have to be censored from being aired to the public, and we may have to consider the use of mosaics after the film.”

“…I thought…A class’ students were the only normal one…”

“Principal. I was making a joke.”

“Your joke isn’t funny at all, you know!?”

“Anyway, Kudou-san’s attitude towards sex is more open and outgoing. I think she’s not a suitable choice to represent the image of a school that promotes studying.”

“Is that so…then, let’s have Kinoshita Yuuko be the main actor. Can you please pass a message to her?”

“I understand.”

“Oh yes, how’s this girl’s singing?”

“What do you mean?”

“We don’t have many people in the choir. I want to let that child and A class sing the school anthem together with the choir, and that she stands at the front.”

“I don’t really understand, but there shouldn’t be any problems if it’s her. Her twin brother Kinoshita Hideyoshi is in the drama club, and once performed a musical. I feel that she as the older sister should have some ability.”

“She’s really a perfectly outstanding student.”

“Yeah. She has such outstanding conduct, beauty, excellent grades, and is very sociable. It’s impossible to find another model student like her.”

“I’m back.”

“……Haa…”

“Fm? Ane-ue, what’s with you? It’s really unlike you to sigh at such a moment.”

That acting maniac idiot brother of mine came home after club activities and widened his eyes after seeing me like this.

“What do you mean, Hideyoshi? Is it really strange for me to sigh like this?”

“No, I didn’t mean that…”

Even though he says so, he’s raising his eyebrows in a stunned manner.

Whenever I see that face, I get the feeling that I’m facing the mirror.

It might be a little weird to say that when I have the exact same appearance, but Hideyoshi really has a very pretty face. Bright wide eyes, clear and speckless skin, a nice oval face, he’s definitely a pretty boy who has nice rosy cheeks (?) that every girl will be jealous of—but I think this sounds like something I can be proud of.

But unlike me, who had to spend so much effort trying to slim down and such in order to maintain top shape, this idiot has such a cute face even though he doesn’t do anything. it’s really unfair! And also, for some reason, he’s more popular amongst the guys than me…he’s a guy! A guy!!

“…Well, that doesn’t really matter now…”

Another sigh came out from her mouth.

“What exactly happened? It’s unexpected that you’ll toss aside your favorite literature of pretty boys making out with each other and space out. Something definitely happened, right? Also, you’re not dressed in your underwear or jersey…”

Hideyoshi tilted his head as he stared at the box of internet purchases lying on the living table. To me, who cares about how the world outside views me, online net shopping is really very convenient. No matter what troublesome things I buy,

my interests will not be revealed to everyone in class no matter what I buy online.

“The only interest I really exalt is reading girl-oriented light novels while wearing easy-fitting clothes. You have no reason to tell me off like that.”

“It being the only thing is one thing, but it doesn’t seem right to call it exalted…”

“What’s with that blunt expression of yours?”

Really, why must the world view such an interest so coldly? It’s true however that when people ask me what my interest is, I’ll say ‘reading books’ and when I answer,

“I like pure literature, especially the story of “The Sound of the Mountain” by Kawabata Yasunari[1]. This story has words that express reminiscences of the past and love as the central theme that touched my heart…”

And when I answer,

“I like girl-oriented light novels, especially the part in ‘When I wait for you under the legendary tree (Vol.3)’, where Shinji, whose love was not accepted, attacked Yuuichi with a blunt weapon. It was really a moving scene…”

I think there’s a big difference in these two sayings.

“Then, what happened? Is there something troubling you, ane-ue?”

Hideyoshi asked with a nonchalant attitude. Should I say that it’s a problem? Or that it’s a bother…

“Hideyoshi, you’re good at singing, right?”

“Singing? Well, it’s not that I can be considered good at it, but it’s definitely a lot better than yours, ane-ue.”

“Ku…you really dare to say it…!”

It’s vexing, but he’s right about that, unfortunately.

“Haa…why must it be that you can do what I can’t do…”

“Besides that, your studies have been outstanding throughout.”

“I want to have the talent to sing instead of having the talent to study now…”

I think my voice isn’t bad, but my sense of rhythm is a complete flaw. Even when I go to karaoke with everyone, I’ll just be clapping together with everyone.

“What is it? Is it that you have a chance to sing in front of people?”

“That’s how it is. Our Takahashi-sensei here told me *‘I can only ask you for this, Kinoshita-san.’* and hoped that I could perform a promotional movie for the school…”

“Singing in a school promotional video. You mean, singing the school anthem?”

“You’re correct…haa…”

Thinking about this makes me very depressed. Even if I start working hard now to learn how to sing, I don’t think there’ll be much of an improvement.

“If it bothers you so much, couldn’t you have refused Miss Takahashi’s request?”

“I don’t want to. I’ve always worked so hard to maintain that outstanding student image in front of everyone. How can I just give up because of such a trivial thing? Don’t joke around!”

“You’re really dedicated in maintaining your appearance there…”

“That’s just like a Kinoshita bloodline or something. You perform on the stage, while I perform the role of an honor student in my daily life.”

“Muu, if you think of it that way, we may be really alike.”

I don’t want to admit it, but if we leave aside our gender and personalities, us siblings’ natures might be very similar. Our appearances, and even our inner mindsets may be mixed up…

“…(stares).”

“Wha, what is it, ane-ue? Why are you staring at my face? Is there something on it?”

Really, alike.

“…You’re, really good at imitating others, right?”

“If possible, I hope you’ll call it acting.”

“That kind of small thing doesn’t matter…Hideyoshi, can you act as me?”

“That sort of level is very easy. I have a clear grasp on your characteristics.”

“That’s right. We’ve been together since we were born.”

Besides, he did some things during the summoning tests before.

“If we just swap around for a while during filming, I suppose you’ll…”

“Ane-ue, are you thinking of letting me take over you…?”

Hideyoshi gave a look of disgust as he backed away.

“That’s right. As long as you wear my clothes, fill up some things under the chest and don’t cause any mishaps, nothing will be exposed, right?”

“Stuff things under the chest? What are you saying, ane-ue? That level of chest size doesn’t need that kind of thing—A, ANE-UE! WAI…! MY JOINTS THERE MUST NOT BE TWISTED IN THAT DIRECTION…!”

“Hideyoshi, I’m really, troubled here, you know? Won’t you listen to me?”

“I’M FEELING TROUBLED HERE TOO!?”

“So, we’re even then? Shouldn’t siblings help each other?”

“No, that kind of reason is too wrong no matter what—OWWWW! I, I UNDERSTAND! I’LL BE VERY GRATEFUL TO HELP OUT!”

“I see. That’s great. I’ll endure for now then, and I won’t snap your elbow.”

Until this switch around is over, that is.

“Uu…seriously, it’s bothersome to have such a violent older sister.”

“What? That’s because you just said something unnecessary.”

“Muu…I’d just stated the fact…speaking of which, when are we going to begin the switch?”

“We’ll meet up after school tomorrow and change clothes at the sports equipment room…as for the padding, since you say it’s alright, there’s no need to do so.”

“After school tomorrow? My class will have a remedial lesson, I’d say.”

“Remedial? Won’t it be bad to skip it?”

“Hm. I’d be climbing a step closer to being retained if I’d skip it.”

“How bad are your grades exactly…”

“This is the only thing I can’t argue against…”

“Well, it can’t be helped if that is the case. I’ll act your part there.”

“Ane-ue would?”

“Yes.”

“No, that’s…”

“What? Are you saying that I can’t replace you?”

What can this guy do that I can’t do other than singing? I’m not that stupid. I do know that guy’s traits just like how it is the other way around.

“No, I’m not saying that you can’t replace me, ane-ue…but, please don’t interact too much with the students in my class. Once they know that you’re a girl…”

“If they know?”

“They’ll definitely say that I’m a real girl the next day…”

“…They won’t guess that you swapped places with me, but will think that you’re a girl, huh…as expected of F class.”

“So, I’d hope that you’ll be careful when interacting with them.”

“I get it. Don’t expose too much this time. I’ll reward you well if we can pull this off successfully.”

“Leave it to me.”

After that, I checked that Hideyoshi’s singing of the school anthem had no problems, and put down the box of internet purchases in a relieved manner. In the last volume, Yuuichi had a weapon ready, got beaten back, and managed to drug Shinji. I’m really looking forward to how the events will develop.

The next day, after school, I checked that there was no one else around, and entered the sports equipment room and swapped clothes with Hideyoshi with the fastest speed possible.

“Really, you’re really just like me.”

“We’re twins anyway. It’s not weird for us to be alike.”

“We’re twins, huh. I feel that there’s no need for us to be so alike.”

Even so, it’s because of our similar appearances, or we wouldn’t be able to pull this off…but I have a bad feeling about this for some reason.

“I’d be going then. I’ll leave the remedial to you, ane-ue.”

Hideyoshi put on the tie, and then reached his hand out for the door handle of the sports equipment room.

“Ah, hold on, Hideyoshi. Take this.”

I called out to Hideyoshi and handed something to him.

“Hm? What’s this?”

Hideyoshi looked troubled as I handed him a small device.

“A listening bug.”

“Ane-ue…where on earth did you get that from…?”

“One of your classmates lent it to me. I tried asking him, and he happily gave it to me.”

But I used your sleeping photos as exchange.

“So it’s Muttsurini. Seriously, that guy…”

“Alright, just put that on as you move. I’ll track your movements from it.”

“Even if you don’t check on me, I’d be able to act as you properly, ane-ue…”

“Your ‘properly’ here isn’t reliable at all.”

“Well, so be it. it’ll be good if this can make you relax, ane-ue.”

Hideyoshi put the bug behind him and left the sports equipment room while dressed in the girls uniform.

“Then, I should head over to that filthy F classroom.”

I actually wanted to remain close to him in order to observe him, but he already agreed to help me perform on film, and it’s cruel of me if I swap over with that guy and skip the remedial. I should do my part well and head over to F classroom.

God, I beg of you, please don’t let that guy do anything stupid…

“NOT GOOD! SUGAWA CLIMBED THROUGH THE WINDOW AND ESCAPED TO THE NEXT CLASSROOM!”

“THAT SWINE BASTARD…! SO THE RUMORS OF HIM BREAKING THE IRONBLOOD PACT OF THE FFF BY ALMOST EXCHANGING NUMBERS WITH D-CLASS’ TAMANO-SAN WAS TRUE…!? LISTEN UP! THAT GUY’S NO LONGER OUR LEADER. HE’S A HERETIC! FIND HIM AND FINISH HIM OFF”

“““ROGER THAT! PLEASE GIVE INSTRUCTIONS”””

“SQUADS A-E, ONCE YOU FIND HIM, BRING HIM TO THE INQUISITION! ALSO, DON’T FORGET TO DELETE THE RECORDED NUMBERS! THERE’S THE CHANCE THAT THEY MAY HAVE EXCHANGED NUMBERS! SQUADS F-G, USE ANY MEANS YOU CAN THINK OF TO SPREAD SLANDER ABOUT HIM! BE ESPECIALLY VICIOUS TO D CLASS! SQUAD H, GO FIND FUNAKOSHI-SENSEI (single 46 year old woman)! WE MUST DEFINITELY TEACH THAT TRAITOR WHAT THE GRAVEYARD OF A HUMAN LIFE IS!!!”

“““ROGER THAT!!!”””

I could hear angry roars the moment I arrived in front of the classroom.

…What in the world is this class doing…

I try to resist the urge to turn right as I open the door.

And then, what I see inside are masked guys wielding leather whips and candles, running about wildly.

“Really, what are you doing!?”

Who are these guys? Why isn’t anyone preparing for the lessons before the remedial? Before I even talk about lessons, someone please explain what’s with these get-up? Are they some religious militant group!?

“Ah, welcome back, Hideyoshi.”

A guy who’s been running around wildly takes off his hood and approaches me.

It’s Yoshii Akihisa-kun, and he’s a famous person in our year, no the school. I think it’s because of what he does all the time that he’s called an idiot…he has quite the decent appearance, so this is a pity.

“Hm? Arre? What is it?”

That Yoshii-kun’s staring at my face.

“Wha, what’s— it about, Akihisa?”

What is it. I barely managed to swallow my words that were about to be released. This is dangerous. I’m Hideyoshi now. I better take note of my tone.

“You do seem different from usual…”

“Yo, you’re thinking too much! I’m always like this.”

Even our relatives close to us can’t even tell us apart, and yet he managed to do so in such a short time…! This guy who’s always being called an idiot is way too sharp here!

“Really…? But, normally, if I talk like this…well, I feel that you’re more feminine and cute normally.”

What should I do? I really have the urge to immediately snap this idiot’s carotid artery.

“Instead of that, how’s the remedial? I see that the gang’s not that motivated.”

“Ah, yeah. If it’s the remedial, Ironman did tell us. He told us to finish up the printed worksheets first, and then we’ll continue with the lessons.”

“I see. So that’s why everyone’s moving around so freely.”

“It’s just like self-study period before Ironman comes back.”

Looks like Nishimura-sensei too went to prepare for the introduction movie. If not for that, I don’t think that teacher will take his eyes away from this class even if it’s for a short time.

“Leaving that aside, it’s not just a feeling. I think you do sound different from

usual, Hideyoshi. Do you have a cold—”

“Report! We’ve obtained new information. Squad F has interacted with D class’ Tamano-san. She says that she has no interest in Sugawa and says that “I want to know more about Aki-chan instead’! I repeat! D class’ Tamano Miki has interest in Yoshii Akihisa! D class’ Tamano Miki has interest in Yoshii Akihisa!”

“Farewell!”

On hearing the report, Yoshii-kun immediately took off his hood and dashed off like an escaping rabbit.

“DON’T LET HIM GET AWAY! LET THE BACKUP FORCES FORM THE ASSAULT SQUADS! WE CAN’T LET THAT GUY RAMPAGE FURTHER!!”

“BUT WAIT! I THINK TAMANO SAID AKI-CHAN THERE! YOSHII’S REALLY DISGUSTING, BUT AKI-CHAN’S JUST MY TYPE!”

“ME TOO!”

Really…this class is full of idiots…

But this is just what I want. Luckily, it seems that they’re having self-study time, so I can check on Hideyoshi’s situation properly. Let me think. This seems like it’s similar to a recorder—done.

I put on the earphone of the device I borrowed from Tsuchiya-kun at noon break and switched it on. A shrill noise rang for a while, and then, the voice became clear.

“—thank you, Kinoshita-san.”

“Eh? Did I do something you have to thank me for, Kubo-kun?”

Ah, I hear it. it’s Hideyoshi’s voice, right? It does sound different from his usual voice, so this is the voice other people are hearing from me. The sound quality isn’t very good, and it’s hard to tell who’s talking.

“Yes. It’s thanks to you that I managed to summon courage. I managed to gain lots of confidence the moment I knew I have a comrade amongst my classmates.”

“Comrade?”

From what I can guess from the conversation, the one talking should be Kubo-kun, but what is he talking about? The filming doesn’t seem like it's started, so are they randomly chatting away..but, Kubo-kun and a comrade? What are they talking about…?

“But speaking of which, I never thought that you’re a homosexual. It really surprised me.”

WHAT IN THE WORLD DID THAT IDIOT JUST SAY—!?

“If possible, can you tell me the name of the person you like? If it’s possible, I’ll definitely help you as much as I can.”

“Erm…about that, the one I like—”

I CAN’T LET HIM TALK FURTHER! I MUST MAKE HIM SHUT UP EVEN IF I HAVE TO PUNCH HIM!

I got out from F classroom and sprinted all the way down the corridor to A classroom, pulling aside the door.

BAM!! A loud sound echoed throughout the classroom.

“Arra, Hideyoshi. What’s the matter?”

Hideyoshi, who's chatting with Kubo-kun, turns towards me while pretending to be me.

I too pretend to be Hideyoshi as I say.

"Ane-ue. Can~I borrow a little of your time? I don't want others to hear about what we're talking about, so how about we head there?"

"? I don't really understand, but sure. Please excuse me for a while, Kubo-kun."

Hideyoshi didn't notice my killing intent at all as he follows me to the stairs platform where no one is at. Right, over here…I'll kill him.

"…What did you say to Kubo-kun…?"

I grabbed onto the dazed looking Hideyoshi by the arms and wrists as I asked while smiling serenely.

"Fm? I'm just chatting with him, and then, I talked about your interests in the other gender."

"Hm…and then?"

"From your thinking process, I tried to tell him that 'you don't have any interests in guys in reality', but it seems that I made a mistake in my choice of words, ane-ue. It seems that Kubo misinterpreted it as 'no interests in the other gender' and mistook you for a homosexual—AH, ANE-UE! NO…! DON'T TURN THE JOINT THERE…!"

"You idiot! When did I say that I have no interests in the other gender!? I only said that I like girl-oriented light novels, so of course I have interests in guys in reality, get it!? Don't say such things that'll cause misunderstandings!"

"I, I understand! I will not make a mistake next time!"

"Really. It's all up, to you…!"

Because of the filming, I can't let Hideyoshi get hurt yet. I'll settle this afterwards, but first, we'll have to focus on what's before this.

I let go of Hideyoshi's arms and wrists as he started crying out in pain, and he rubbed his arms while heading back to the classroom. I should head back to F class too.

"…Yuuko."

"Ah, prez. What is it?"

I returned back to the classroom, and put on the earphone. This time, I hear another voice. This manner of speech is most likely A class' rep Kirishima Shouko-san.

Ahh…not good…if they don't start filming soon, the swap may end up exposed…

"…Over there."

"There? What's there?"

"…The skirt's rolled up."

THAT IDIOT EXPOSED HIMSELF THERE…! REGARDLESS OF WHETHER HIS ACTING IS BAD OR NOT, THAT'S TOO DEFENSELESS OF HIM! HE DOESN'T CARE ABOUT HOW CAREFUL WE ARE WHEN WE WEAR OUR SKIRTS!

Hideyoshi's tone doesn't seem to imply that he cares about my feelings when I'm being all terrified here as he doesn't seem bothered by this skirt-flipping like thing.

"Thanks for the concern, prez. But I'm fine"

“…Fine?”

“It’s fine if they’re not seen.”

“…But if the skirt’s flipped.”

“No. it’s fine. That’s because.”

“…Because?”

“Because—I made sure to wear my underwear properly today.”

DOK DOK DOK DOK DOK

“WHAT IN THE WORLD DID YOU JUST SAY!? IT SOUNDS LIKE I DON’T USUALLY WEAR UNDERWEAR!!”

“What I’d meant was that it’s fine because I’m wearing gym shorts under my skirt.”

“I DON’T GET THAT FEELING AT ALL!”

“But gym shorts are part of underwear.”

“SHUT UP! ANYWAY, DON’T SAY SUCH UNEXPECTED THINGS AGAIN, REMEMBER THAT! ALSO, WATCH THE SKIRT!”

The good thing in this unfortunate incident is that it seems only prez heard about it. if not, my rating will be sorely dented.

“Muu…but ane-ue, your skirt is too short and loose around the waist. It’s really hard to move in this…”

“Are you saying that my figure is worse than yours?”

This idiot…once his purpose is done, I’ll definitely deal with him severely…

“Anyway, be careful with what you do! It’ll be troublesome if you end up getting harassed by some weird guy because you’re too alluring!”

“Understood. I’ll take note.”

“Do it properly.”

I released Hideyoshi and let him return to A class.

That idiot might cause some trouble when I’m not around to notice. I head towards F classroom as I listen to the earphone. At this point, it can’t be helped even if people give me weird looks.

“Ki, Kinoshita-san!”

“? What is it? You’re—”

“I’m Yokomizo Kouji from 2-F. Actually, erm, well…”

F class’ Yokomizo Kouji-kun? Who’s that? I feel that I never talked to this person before…and he does sound rather panicky. Don’t tell me…

“A, actually, I like you a lot, Kinoshita-san! Please go out with me!”

A confession!? But, of all moments, he chose to do so when Hideyoshi’s swapped with me. This guy really doesn’t know how to watch the timing…or is it because Hideyoshi’s swapped with me that he finds me charming, and so decided to confess to him? I guess not, right…?

Well, leaving that aside, I’m happy to receive his feelings, but I don’t intend to go out with anyone at this point, and I’m not too familiar with him. I’m sorry, but I’ll have to reject him. It’ll be best if Hideyoshi can reject him without hurting him…

And as I think this way, Hideyoshi seems to understand what I feel as he says the reason why I’m rejecting him formally. Fm fm. As expected of us being twins. He completely understands what I’m thinking.

“Well…I’m happy to receive your feelings, but…”

“Tha, that’s…!”

“I’m sorry.”

The image of Hideyoshi lowering his head was passed to me through the earphone.

That guy really can do it. Beautiful rejection…but I just find it inconceivable to hear his rejection that sounds like he’s used to it.

“Then, please tell me the kind of person you like, Kinoshita-san! I’ll try and become the kind of guy you like and make you—”

Yokomizo-kun continued to bug around.

It’s annoying, but I do like it that I’m being liked like this. Even so, the answer just now won’t change.

“Even so…I’m sorry.”

“Wh, why…?”

“Because, I’m—only interested in 12-year-old pretty boys…”

DOK DOK DOK DOK DOK

“I’LL KILL YOU.”

“An, ane-ue? Why are you so agitated all of a sudden? Calm down first.”

“How can I calm down!?”

Me being a homosexual might be thought of as a joke here, and here I'm being treated as a no-panties liberator under the skirt!? What kind of an incorrigible woman have I become!? Isn't this worse than being labelled as someone who's called out for having no sense of rhythm!?

"I'd feel that I've worked hard to understand your interests, right, ane-ue?"

"Uu…well, about that, I can't say it's completely wrong…but those are just what I like in fiction. I do have other interests in reality."

"Muu…this is really complicated…"

"Basically, my interests in 2-D and 3-D are completely different! Besides, didn't I say not to mention those so openly!? If you want to act as me, be more thorough!"

"Mu…now that you mention it, it's just like what you say…sorry, ane-ue. I accidentally prioritized your appearance at home and replicated that."

"…So it seems that I give that kind of feeling to you at home…"

Though I do think that I'm more refined…

"Speaking of which, only that person heard your rejection line, right?"

"The line about pretty boys under 12?"

"Yes. It'll be troublesome if anyone else hears it."

I guess it's fine, but…if anyone else hears it, I'll just have to make that person disappear, right…?

"I haven't witnessed any witnesses, but do not worry about the acting, ane-ue. I'll perfectly replicate your social appearance from now on."

"I feel that there're a lot of things that can't be recovered…"

Better not to say anything else. In that case, I'll just have to hang on and let this guy keep acting until the end. I have nothing to lose anyway…

☆

I got myself completely tired dealing with Hideyoshi as I returned back to F classroom, and for some reason, Yoshii-kun came up to me.

“Arre? Where did you go, Hideyoshi?”

“Ah, Yo—then, Akihisa. I just went to the toilet. What about you? There’s no need to run, is there?”

“Yeah. As I was running, I heard that Yokomizo-kun confessed to Kinoshita Yuuko-san, so everyone’s pursuing him now.”

I’m not very familiar with you, but to you, the one called Yokomizo-kun, I’m sorry. You’re likely a victim who suffered the most other than me in this incident…

“Really, Yokomizo-kun won’t heed his lesson. He got punished last week for trying to ask Hideyoshi out for a date, and he’s now asking the older sister because he failed.”

I’ll take that back. To the guy called Yokomizo-kun, if I meet you next time, I’ll definitely snap your bones in the opposite direction.

“Ah, that’s right, Hideyoshi. About your sister…”

“Wha, what about my sister?”

“? What are you panicking about?”

“I, I’d panic from time to time too.”

“Well, never mind…speaking of your sister, Hideyoshi, she’s going to perform in the school promotional movie.”

Ah, what? So it’s about that…I thought my identity got revealed there. It really shocked me.

“Since it’s rare for us to have self-study, how about we check it out?”

“Hm? Tha, that’s true. I’m a little concerned here. It might not be a bad idea to check it out.”

If we continue to chat in this classroom like this, there’s a high chance that Yoshii-kun will see that we switched identities. Also, I’m concerned about Hideyoshi’s situation too, so it might be good to check things out.

We leave the classroom which is buzzing with angry roars, and Yoshii-kun and I head towards A classroom.

“However, your sister is really amazing, Hideyoshi.”

“? How?”

“Well, she’s cute, sports and studies can’t stump her, and she’s going to sing in front of a camera today, you know? She’s amazing for being able to do anything.”

“I, is that so?”

Yoshii-kun’s innocent eyes glanced behind, leaving me speechless. For some reason, I feel a sense of guilt for tricking him. To be honest, I have no sense of rhythm, and I can’t sing in front of the camera at all.

Even if I respond to his expectations, I have to put all my hopes on Hideyoshi succeeding no matter whether it’s right or not. My pride won’t allow me to show that I have a bad sense of rhythm. Since you created so many lies about it, it’s about time you make this a success, or else it’ll be a shame to me…!

“? What is it, Hideyoshi? It’s rare to see you so horrified. You look like your sister there, you know?”

“Ah, it, it’s nothing. Nothing at all. Don’t mind.”

Why is it that I’m the one giving the terrified expression here? I want to grab Yoshii-kun’s joints and hear his explanation, but I continue to keep that smiling face as I suppress that urge. It’ll all be a waste if things collapse here.

I carry the fake smile and walk a few steps, only to hear a certain melody.

“Ah, this is the school anthem right? Looks like they’re starting from the combined choir.”

“Un, looks like it.”

The grand piano in A classroom leads the rhythm, and the combined singing voices of around 20 people can be heard. There’s no alto or tenor in this, just a simple melody of the main theme. However, the combined singing here had a refreshing feeling that reminds me of the clear summer sky and also the presence of the gathering rainy clouds floating in that sky—the wonderful feeling.

“Hideyoshi, your sister is leading the singing in the middle.”

Approaching closer, I see that Hideyoshi, who’s dressed up as me, is standing in the most obvious focal point, the center, singing.

I do find it vexing, but I must say that my brother here has a decent appearance. I’m not saying that he’s pretty, but whether it’s Hideyoshi, or anyone else, when people focus on what they want to do, they’ll show off an inexplicable charm. Right now, Hideyoshi’s giving off that charm, looking really attractive. I’m really envious of him.

“As expected, Hideyoshi’s sister is pretty.”

“Is, is that so?”

I felt a little redeemed by Yoshii-kun’s words. If he’s saying ‘as expected’, it means that he more or less feels that I have some charm, right?

“But it’s a pity…”

“Eh? What?”

“Just now, when I was running for my life, I heard—”

A really ominous premonition burnt within me.

“—That Hideyoshi’s sister normally doesn’t wear underwear, and is interested in

only girls and young boys.”

“FORGET ABOUT IIITTTTTTTT—!!”

“UWAH! What is it, Hideyoshi!? What’s wrong!? Why are you suddenly using wrestling moves on me!?”

“Who cares! Forget about everything you heard! I’ll use this pain to erase all your memories!”

“Hi, Hideyoshi! I don’t know why, but your chest! There’s a faint soft feeling touching my arm, UWAAHH!?”

“WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY ‘FAINT’! I DO HAVE SOME MORE OR LESS HERE!”

“What is it, Hideyoshi!? What did I do wrong here for you to suddenly use violence ARGGGGGHHHH!!!?”

“ANYWAY, FORGET ABOUT THIS—!!”

“WHAT!? WHY AM I BEING TREATED LIKE THIS—!?”

“…Ane-ue.”

“…What is it, Hideyoshi?”

“Recently, those guys in class seem to have a rumor that there’s growth of my chest…”

“What a coincidence. In fact, my classmates seem to have a rumor going on between them that ‘Kinoshita Yuuko normally doesn’t wear underwear and likes girls and young boys’…”

“““…”””

“HOW ARE YOU GOING TO COMPENSATE ME, ANE-UE!? THINGS ENDING UP LIKE THAT, I CAN’T BATHE WITH AKIHISA AND THE REST, AND I CAN’T EVEN USE THE GYM CHANGING ROOM!?”

“IT’S FINE SINCE YOUR PREDICAMENT HASN’T CHANGED AT ALL, OKAY!? I WENT FROM HONOR STUDENT TO A BLATANT THREE-STRIKE PERVERT, YOU KNOW!? YOU SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS!”

“IT’S BECAUSE YOU MENTIONED THAT WE SWITCH AROUND! EVEN SHIMADA’S BEEN ACTING WEIRD AND WAS STARING AT MY CHEST LIKE A GRUDGING AVENGER!”

“SERVES YOU RIGHT! IT’S BECAUSE YOU DID SOME WEIRD ACTING!”

“WRONG, IT’S YOUR FAULT, ANE-UE!”

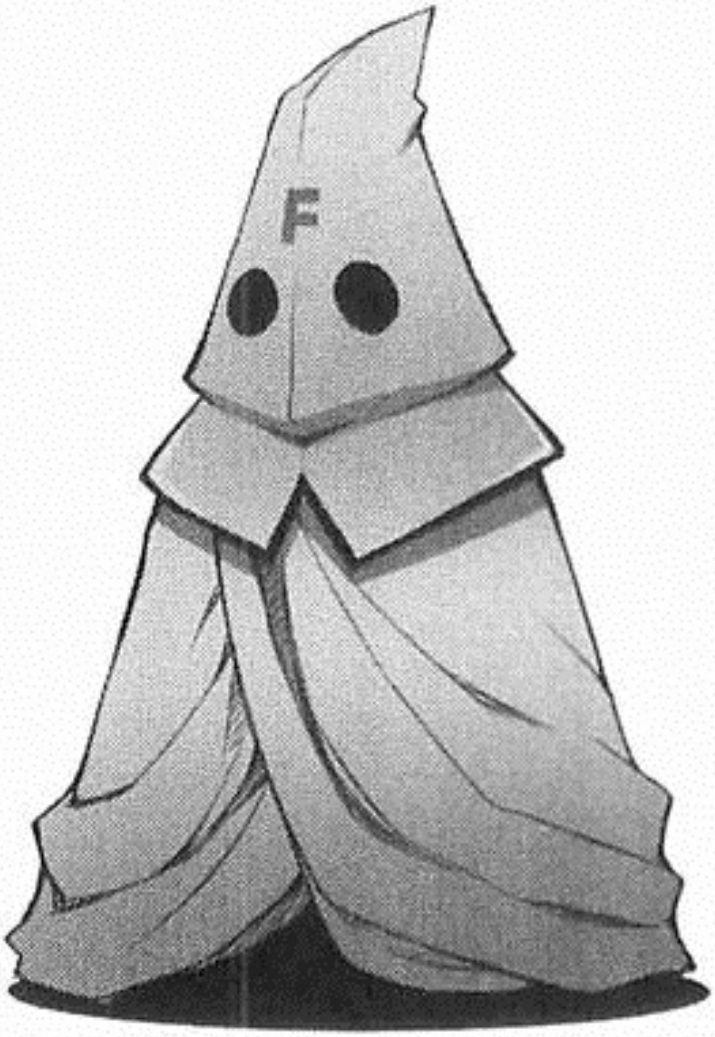
“NO, IT’S YOURS!”

““……””

“Well, we’re powerless to do anything now, so let’s just leave it alone…”

“Yeah…we can’t do anything even if we’re concerned about it…”

““There’ll soon be a topic even more amazing, and these events will soon be forgotten (anyway)””



FFF

Fumizuki News: Entertainment

文月新聞

【芸能】

THE F CLASS GIRL IN QUESTION HAS SOMEONE SHE LIKES!? THAT TARGET IS THAT EXTREMELY PRIMITIVE AND DESPICABLE～ ONE!!

最近様々な事件で何かと話題に上がる二年生のFクラスだが、一部の生徒の噂によるとそこの数少ない女子生徒であるS田M波さんに好きな相手がいるという話だ。校内ランキングの〝彼女にしたくない女子〟部門で名を馳せる彼女だが、その裏では好意を表に出せずにいるいわゆる〝隠れファン〟が多いという事実も少なからず認められている。そんな彼女の真実に我々文月学園新聞部は勇気を持って迫ってみた。部員のうち数名が彼女に直接話を伺いに行ったところ、その途中で不幸にも事故にあってしまったようなので直接取材を断念。代わりに彼女をよく知る周囲の人々に話を聞いてみた（詳細は次項インタビュー記事にて）。

そこで発覚したお相手とは、なんと我々の想定を覆す驚きの人物（？）のチンパンジーさん（年齢住所職業不明）だった。何時、どのように知り合ったのかは不明だが、クラスメイトがひしめく教室で高らかに熱愛宣言をするなど、その気持ちはかなりのものの様子。時間を置いてからは冷静になったためか、その想いを否定する動きも見られたものの、それでは好きな相手がいないのかと聞き返すと赤面して俯いてしまうとか。彼女の性格を考慮するに素直になれていないだけでその想い自体は本物だと言えるだろう。記者個人としては理解できない気持ちではあるが、同じ学舎の生徒として、できる限り彼女を応援したい。

An interview with those who knows her well.

"Anyway, that really shocked me."

クラスメイトの
Y井A久さん

Y-shii-kun merely said this and remained silent after that. Unconfirmed reports state that Y-shii-kun was slightly enticed by the small opposite gender charm S-da-san has. In this sense, he might have lost to this chimpanzee-san in this battle over her. The chance to get her back hasn't disappeared, but S-da-san's abnormal values shocked him, and he's unable to contain his shock. Unexpectedly, he helped represent the thoughts of S-da-san's hidden fans.

An interview with those who knows her well.

"I definitely won't recognize it. it's still possible if it's that swine, but it's complete arrogance for a mere chimpanzee to capture onee-sama's heart. Also, onee-sama already has this Miharu as her lover. It's a joke that you people have doubts about it. How can anyone other than Miharu touch onee-sama's flat chest!"

自称【S田さんの恋人】
S水M春さん

S-mizu-san was completely furious as this interview was going on. To her, this piece of news basically trampled on a land mine. On a side note, our newspaper club can't confirm if she's really S-da-san's lover.

An interview with someone who's similar to a chimpanzee.

"You brats sure have guts."

チンパンジーの相似形
N村S一教諭

We explained the rationale behind this interview to him, and he said these words to us and pulled the entire group to his remedial room. This reporter here went to settle some other things and managed to avoid this calamity. As it is too difficult to dig further into this incident, we can only give up on trying to do this report.

Unfortunately, we could not grasp the identity of the Chimpanee-shi S-da-san likes, we had an interview with someone similar to him.

A solemn moment of condolence to our comrades.

-2-E Yano Takeo (Newspaper club interviewer)
Got into an accident when his joints were twisted in the opposite direction while trying to extract information from S-da M-mi-san.
-2-B Igawa Kengo (Newspaper Club interviewer)
Same as what happened to Yano-shi before.
-2-B Ono Akira (Newspaper Club interviewer)
Disappeared after his interview with N-mura-sensei.
Numerous other Newspaper Club members are involved in accidents too.

LOVE EXPOSED!
THE SCHOOL IS SHOCKED!
文月新聞
THE F CLASS GIRL IN QUESTION HAS SOMEONE SHE LIKES!?
THAT TARGET IS THAT EXTREMELY PRIMITIVE AND DESPICABLE~ ONE!!

Class 2-F has been involved in many incidents recently, and a group of students amongst them say that one of the few girls in F class, S-da, M-mi has someone she likes. She, who's highly ranked amongst the highest in the poll 'The girl I don't want to date' ranking, actually has a lot of 'hidden fans' who admire her, and this fact has to be recognized. Our Fumitzuki Academy Newspaper club summoned our courage to ask this very popular person about the truth. However, when our club members went to ask her about this, an unfortunate accident happened in this, so as replacement, we interviewed the people familiar with her (please check the lower section of this report).

And thus, we found out that the other party was a person (?) that completely confounded our expectations, the chimpanzee-san (Age, address and occupation unknown). How they met and when they did is still a mystery, but according to classmates, she suddenly admitted her love for chimpanzee-san in front of everyone in class, so it seems that this affair of hers is true. After a while of cooling down, she vehemently denies this however. Someone asked if she has someone she likes, and she blushed and fainted. Considering her personality, we feel that she's just unable to be honest with her own feelings, and her feelings themselves are real. As a reporter, I do not understand her feelings, but as a student in the same school, I want to support her with all I can.

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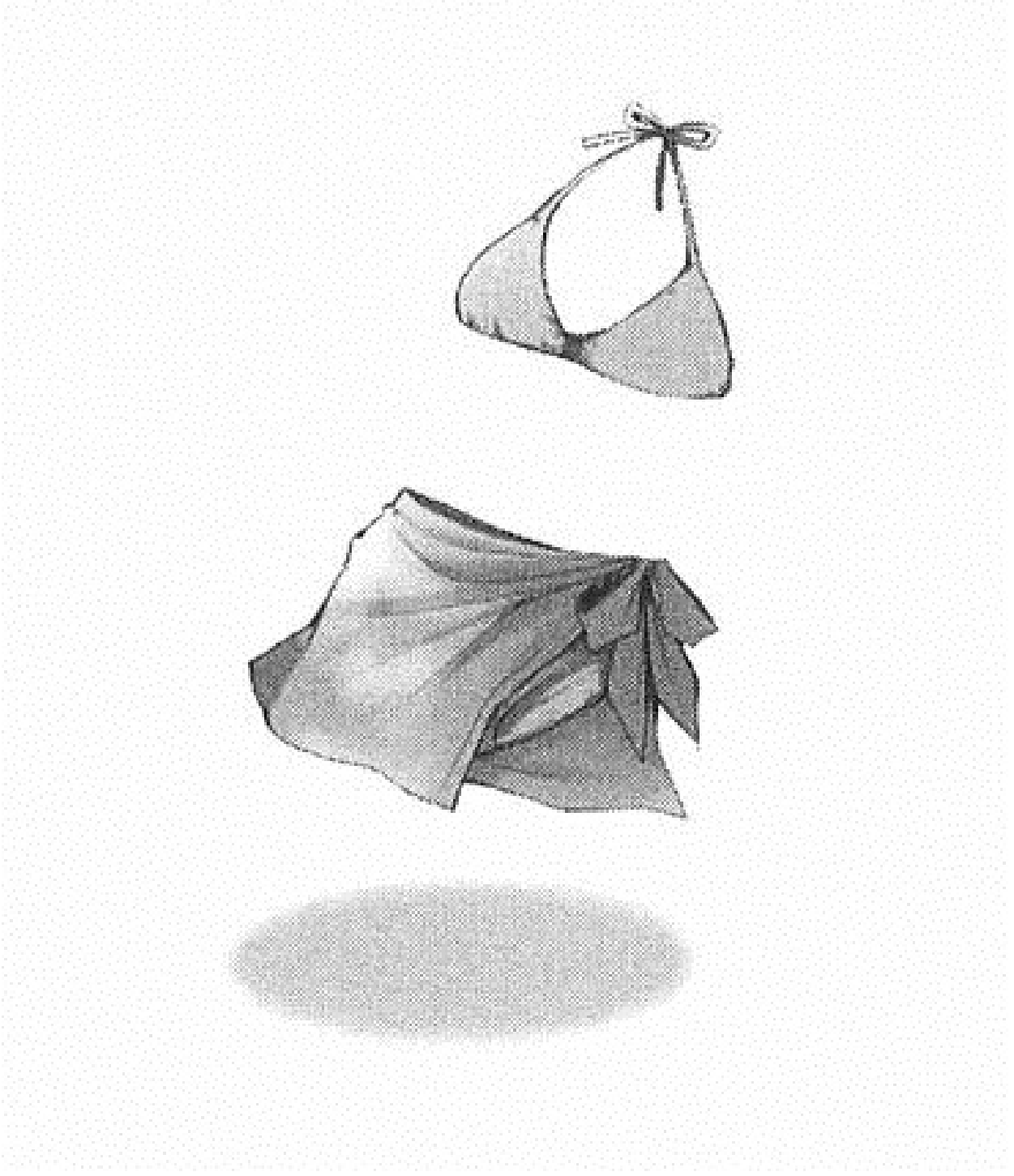

Me and the Seaside and the Festival Uproar First Half

僕と海辺とお祭り騒ぎ（前編）

“By the way, Aki-kun. You said that you were going to invite a few friends, so how many did you manage to get?”

“There are 9 people including nee-san.”

“Nine people? That’s a lot.”

“Yes. Everyone wanted to join in so there are a lot of people. Is it not OK?”

“No. It won’t be a problem if we rent a van……But who did you invite?”

“En—……, well, they’re schoolmates.”

“School mates. Like who for example?”

“Like Yuuji, Hideyoshi, Muttsurini……”

“Sakamoto-kun and the other guys eh. What about the others?”

“……..Hi”

“’Hide’? I thought I’ve already heard you mention Hideyoshi-kun?”

“Hi……Hi • Mit • Su ♪”[2]

“Aki-kun. Please clench your teeth and endure for just a short while.”

“So, sorry! I was playing a small joke! It’s just a small joke so please don’t hit me!”

“I know. If you speak honestly, nee-san will give you a kiss as a reward.”

“The other four are people from this universe that you’ve met yesterday.”

“You’ve answered me nicely. Then~ Raise your chin and close your eyes”

“Wait! I was obviously lying just now!?”

“Humans can be explained as people from this universe generally.”

“What’s with this ridiculous reasoning!? Wait wait wait wait! I apologize so

please STOP, STOP!”

“…..To be this hated, it’s really—“

“Ah……So, sorry. You’re hurt? But, you can’t do those things, nee-san.”

“—I can’t help it.”

“Pervert! There’s a pervert here! A hopeless pervert is actually living so close beside me!”

“Don’t take it seriously. Thirty percent of it is just a joke.”

“Not good……This person, is more than fifty percent serious……”

“Moreover, Aki-kun should be blamed for lying to me in the first place.”

“Oo……. That……”

“Why are you trying to hoodwink me?”

“That……”

“Yes.”

“If I say it……Will you keep your cool?”

“If it isn’t something like the girls are coming, I won’t be angry nor will I beat you up, and I won’t push you or force you to cross dress—Where are you going Aki-kun?”

“No! I don’t want to make you angry, to be beaten up, pushed down, or forced to cross dress!”

“I see. So there are girls coming with us.”

“I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry.”

“……Well, it’s fine. They’ve also taken good care of you, compared to letting you guys do something at somewhere I can’t see, it’s better this way.”

“Eh? Then, nee-san agrees to this?”

“It won’t happen again.”

“Thank you, nee-san.”

“But.”

“En? What?”

“If something happens during the journey that is deemed by me as impure relationship with the opposite sex……That time, you understand what’ll happen right Aki-kun?”

“Ah, ahaha…….What, what will happen then?”

“I’ll murder your whole family.”

“No, if that’s the case, you’ll be included too.”

Large clouds are floating in the clear sky. That light breeze that can be felt is changing the shape of this cloud. Seeing this scenery before my eyes, only then could the real summer atmosphere be felt. There’s no better weather to bask in the sea.

“Today’s weather sure is suitable for a beach trip.”

Rays of sunlight is unable to make his expression look serious, he who is wearing T-shirt and a pair of shorts, that line is muttered by Yuuji who seems full of summer mood no matter how you look at him. This guy has a good physique so wearing crudely really suits him.

“Really. My ch—No, my heart’s really excited.”

The one talking is Hideyoshi wearing a combination of thin hoodie and shorts. That friend of mine who is still confusing others about his sexuality with his cute

appearance even today, is carrying a sports bag with his eyes full of eagerness waiting for the arrival of the car.

“……I’m worried that the blood packs will spoil.”

Muttsurini, who’s wearing crumpled denims is looking around with an anxious look while carrying an ice box. I guess that lots of blood packs that provides life-support for that guy is inside. When the sea is mentioned, one will think of swimsuits. I’d say that if we’re not careful, we may risk crossing the Styx River in a short while—This fact can’t be denied.

“Right, Akihisa-kun. It’s a little too late to ask this, but can so many people fit into the car?”[3]

Himeji-san who was wearing a tight rough cotton pareo and T-shirt with a tight sleeveless top on it was looking at me while hugging her travel bag with both of her hands. Her different style is really refreshing.

“I guess so. There’s nine people including your sister, can we still use a normal driving license?”

“En—, nee-san said that there’s no problem……”

Minami’s standing beside me with a long wrap dress and T-shirt. Although this is the first time I’ve seen Minami wearing a casual skirt, I find that any clothes suit her due to her slender build.

“……The driving license for medium cars allows more than eleven passengers……”

“I’ve checked it online yesterday night, the driving license may be normal, but since the car is different, it’s fine even if there are more than ten passengers.”

The A Class pair of Kirishima-san and Kudou-san explained to us. Kirishima-san matched a mini-skirt with a light-coloured summer sweater. As if it actually makes people forget the attractiveness of white and pink of the usual summer heat.

On the other side, Kudou-san,

“En? Yoshii-kun. You seem to really like my dress-up.”

“No, no. I don’t.”

“……Oh, I see……”

“Wh, what?”

“You want to know what’s under my tights, right~?”

“I, I didn’t think of that……!”

Kudou-san is wearing a pair of shorts, her top is tight and short-sleeved and somehow a little revealing. I can’t help but keep noticing her sunburn marks from the time when she changed into her swimsuit, this is bad news for several reasons……

I looked away, and saw Yuuji squint his eyes when he saw Kudou-san’s dress-up.

“Oh really. Kudou joined the swimming club. That’s why she has those healthy sunburn marks.(Puchi—Pugupugu)”

“……Unfaithfulness is forbidden.”

The figure of Kirishima-san poking Yuuji’s eyes calmly and him crumpling onto the floor. That idiot will never learn.

“Oh, it’s still the same, both of them—“

“(Sha-)Ye, yes”

“(Sha-)Re, really, their relationship is really good”

“Both of you please wait. I really wish I was hallucinating, but did you guys just take an offensive stance with both of your fingers pointing at my eyes?”

Both of them would attack me once in a while, silently, recently. Let’s not talk about Minami, even Himeji-san has become this experienced, I really do feel that Himeji-san is being influenced negatively by Class F.

We chatted for a while, Muttsurini who has the sharpest eyes is the first to notice that atmosphere.

“……The car’s here.”

“En? Ohoh. It seems to be so”

A big car that can be considered a mini-bus is driving towards us, stopping in front of us slowly.

The driver’s door opened, the figure that exited is,

“Ah eh……? I’m sorry for letting you guys wait”

My biological sister who shares the same blood with me, Yoshii Akira. By the way, I think this is the first time seeing nee-san drive. I don’t feel safe with nee-san who, is prone to acting outrageously, driving……But it looks like there won’t be any problems.

“Nope, we just arrived early”

“En. We get too excited if we don’t watch out”

“……Looking forward to it”

“Akira-san. Thank you for inviting all of us.”

“I’m really looking forward to this trip too”

First, Yuuji and the other five who are already acquainted with her greeted her. Nee-san smiled when she heard it and replied “The way you guys put it makes me happy”.

Next, Kirishima-san and Kudou-san who are meeting nee-san for the first time went and introduced themselves.

“……Nice to meet you for the first time. I’m Sakamoto Yuuji’s wife Sho “Just wait for a minute! You’re just speaking as you please (Puchi—Pugupugu)”…… Shouko”

“Hello, Yoshii-kun’s sister. I’m Kudou Aiko”

“Hello, Shouko-san, Aiko-san. I’m Aki-kun’s sister Akira”

The peaceful greetings went on. From the looks of it, there are so many girls who are really lively. I’m usually at a place like Class F which is dirty and chaotic, now I have an indescribable and fresh sensation.

“Then. Staying like this isn’t going to do anything, let’s get going”

Nee-san pointed at the car.

“Right. We can still talk in the car, time is precious so let’s set out. Everyone please sit wherever you like.”

“““Yes—”””

I tossed the baggage and Yuuji, who was rolling on the floor, into the car.

The exciting trip has finally begun.

☆

"By the way, Akihisa."

"Hm? What is it, Yuuji?"

In the car, Yuuji, who was sitting beside me, broke the ice.

Regarding the seats, boys and girls were separated from each other because nee-san was close by. Kirishima's sad face and Yuuji's jolly face were in contrast to each other.

"Have you ever gone before to the place we are heading right now? What kind of place is it?"

"Eh? Ahah, hmm. About that....."

I stopped talking for a moment in order to recollect my memories.

If I have to describe that place to him.....

"Hmm? What is it? Have you completely forgotten about it?"

"Impossible. How can something like that happen?"

That guy's so rude. There should be a limit to when you look down on others' memory.

Right. That was actually—

"I remember correctly, it happened during spring, summer or autumn, about five to eight years ago."

"The time range is really huge."

"Methinks that you've completely forgotten about it."

"......*nods*"

I'm sorry. My action was vain.

"In other words, it'll be a surprise for everyone when we get there."

By the way, Hideyoshi, who was sitting in front of us, turned his head towards us.

"Right. We should take this rare chance and hope for the best."

"If we're going to a nearby beach, then there's only a few, but if we're going somewhere far and are going to stay overnight, part of the excitement comes from not knowing where we're going to."

Himeji-san and Minami, who were sitting in the same row with Hideyoshi, turned around and revealed their excited smiles.

Since there were nine passengers in this car, the seats arrangement starting from the front was like this: two persons – two persons – three persons – two persons. The first row included nee-san, who was driving, and Muttsurini, who sat in front because he claimed to be carsick. Behind them were Kirishima-san and Kudou-san. Next was Himeji-san and co. Yuuji and I were sitting in the last row.

Everyone put their baggage on their own seat.....But it seems that the seats are a bit too narrow in the three-persons row.

"Himeji-san. The things on that seat, would you like to hand them over to me here?"

"Eh? Ah, sure. You mean these?"

"Yup. Our seats are more spacious. Just put them here."

"No, you don't have to mind about us since we're fine with it. Minami and Kinoshita-kun are very slim.....but I'm not....."

Himeji-san's tone suddenly lowered. Eh? Did I step on a landmine?

"Mizuki. Could it be that you've.....grown fatter?"

"Wawu!"

The moment Minami spoke, Himeji-san leant backwards while hugging herself.

"Just, just a little! It's really just a tiny bit, I mean.....Just a little, a lot....."

"Where?"

"No, that's not it! It must be... that my long hair is heavy! That's right! It's because of that! It has nothing to do with ice cream and beverages!"

Speaking of that, the weather had turned hotter lately, and the season when our appetite for ice-cream and beverages was stronger had arrived.

"Humph. How silly of you. You got carried away when you lost just a little amount of weight not so long ago. That's why now you have to face such a consequence."

"Ugh.....I was too careless....."

"I got slimmer by a little due to the summer burnout."

"Ehhhh! That, that's too sly! I feel seriously betrayed!"

"Right. I got slimmer.....in the chest part....."

"....."

It's as if the atmosphere of an eerie night drifted around the front row. Why are girls this concerned about their bodies? Both of them already have bodies that are considered outstanding compared to others.....Well, although Minami's chest looks rather disappointing.....

"Himeji and Shimada are both overly concerned about things like these."

Hideyoshi suddenly spoke as if to cheer those two up; I guessed he's thinking what I was thinking. However, Minami covered her face instead when she heard him.

"Don't mind me! After all, my breasts grows slower than Kinoshita's!"

This is bad. That rumor that I carelessly said seems to be known by Minami.

"That's enough, Kinoshita! Don't lie just to cheer me up! I understand! After all Kinoshita is just going to leave me alone and have huge boobs."

"Couldn't something like that be more tragic for me!?"

Ugh.....Words like these, I'd be glad if they restrain themselves from saying them in front of us boys.....it's hard to decide how to react.....

"But Kinoshita-kun, you actually don't have to worry about your body.....your waist is so slender....."

"Calm down, Himeji. How is it possible for me, who is a boy from birth, to have a slender waist?"

"Really.....saying that it's tragic to grow breasts, there's a limit to the luxuries you enjoy....."

"They're hopeless.....the two of them can't understand what I said....."

Hideyoshi muttered softly as if he did best. It seems that everyone has their own things to worry about.

Hideyoshi cleared his throat as if to settle down the gloomy atmosphere, and spoke crisply to two of them.

"But, just like I said, aren't the two of you simply over-concerned? Himeji, Shimada, you don't seem to have changed at all!"

"That, that's not true! I've gotten fatter by 328 grams!"

"Yeah! I've lost 0.4 centimeters!"

"You two sure use weird units of the measurements....."

There's clearly a difference between the two.

"No, although I'm usually not this concerned, this time....."

"Swimsuits are involved, and....."

"Yeah. I guess so."

Himeji-san and Minami suddenly turned to look at nee-san driving, without a reason. I wonder what they are so concerned of.

"......Indeed, Akira-san is very dangerous."

"Right~*boing**twist**boing*! I do feel this way too. I, who’s usually unconcerned about such issues, feel a little bit envious."

Even Kirishima-san and Kudou-san in the second row join in the conversation. It seems like girls have an interest in this sort of thing.

"Yup. Those breasts, I just can't stop envying them..."

"I'm also jealous of how slenderness her waist is....."

".....Akira-san. That's really sly."

"She's like a model~ This pair of breasts are at a despicable degree just like Mizuki's. They look really bouncy."

"What kind of swimsuit do you intend to wear? With a body like this, anything

that you wear is bound to look good....."

"Is it a rather a sexy bikini? How awesome....."

"....I'm envious."

"The swimsuits from those erobooks that look like ropes would fit you too."

"Eh? Kouta-kun, what happened to you? There's a red liquid coming out of your nose."

"....I'm carsick."

It's the first time I'd heard of someone having a nosebleed when he's carsick.

Never mind. It'll be troublesome if we simply interrupt them when they are talking about their bodies, so we'll just go with the flow.

"By the way, Hideyoshi, just put these things here. Mind passing them to me?"

Let's place those baggage properly first.

"Hmm? OK then, please take care of them."

While speaking, Hideyoshi passed me the baggage on his legs and the one beside him, both seemed to be stuffed to the brim. This overly heavy thing.....I guess it must belong to Muttsurini. Could it be that he brought a lot of those equipment for his camera and stuff?

I placed the baggages that were passed to me here. There was still some space left.

"It seems there's enough space here for one more?"

"Oh. Then, I'll also pass this to you."

While speaking, Hideyoshi passed to me a familiar baggage. These are nee-san's things. It seems that there's nothing fragile inside, so I'll just put it here to cushion Muttsurini's stuff.

"*zip*--Hmm?"

As I moved slightly, the opening of the baggage widened a bit. Stuff might come out if I leave it that way. I guess I'll have to zip it properly.

"Hey. Hmm? Why won't the zipper move?"

The zipper seems to be stuck on something. Is it overstuffed? A piece of cloth came out from a corner.

If I wanted to zip it, I guess I'd have to remove the thing that came out. Nee-san's belongings could be put into my bag instead.

While thinking that way, I unzipped it and took it out. One.....Two.....

I fell (A school swimsuit entered the scene).

"Out--!!"

"(Startled)What did you just do!? What happened!?"

"What should I do, Yuuji!? The relative at my side is a hopeless weirdo!"

"Is, is that so.....But, I feel that you, who are tightly holding onto a school swimsuit, seem more of a weirdo....."

"Eh!? That, that's not true.....! This belongs to nee-san."

"I see. So you're interested in your sister's swimsuit. You're absolutely hopeless."

"You.....! Wait! Please don't look at me in disdain! It's a misunderstanding!"

"OK, I understand. Please wait. Wait till I remove you from my phone contacts. Then, I'll patiently listen to your explanation."

"Damn you, Yuuji.....! Are you saying that knowing me was a mistake.....!"

"Wait, Yuuji. You can't blacklist him if you delete his number."

"Don't, Hideyoshi! Please don't downgrade me from a 'Friend' to 'Stalker', which is worse than being a stranger! It's fine if it's Yuuji, but Hideyoshi saying it deals me a hard blow."

"Ah.....I'm sorry, Akira-nee-san. Can we drop by the police station before going to the beach?"

"That's wrong! We should be going to a swimsuit shop instead! There's no need to get me imprisoned in a detention house!"

"Don't worry, Akihisa. There're no swimming pool in detention houses."

"Argghhh! It's not for me, but for nee-san! Our conversation can't be more madly misunderstood!"

Why must I be regarded as a pervert!

"What is it, Aki-kun? You don't like my swimsuit?"

"I hate it! I hate it from the bottom of my heart!"

"But, didn't Aki-kun tell me 'I don't wanna feel embarrassed so please wear an attire that is less revealing'?"

"I'm sorry! Walking with a sister who is still wearing a school swimsuit at this age is even more embarrassing than walking with one who is wearing a revealing outfit!"

"??? But, won't it feel lonely for me if I'm wearing something different from everyone else's?"

"Eh? What are you trying to say, nee-san?"

"Look, aren't all of you wearing this kind of swimsuit since all of you are students? A 'School' swimsuit like this."

"Something every student wears.....? Could it be, nee-san, that you wore this when you were in university.....!?"

University students are still considered students. I doubt that's really the case, but

this feeling of uneasiness is hard to get rid of. If it's nee-san, then it's more than possible.

I felt cold sweat forming on my back. I've never thought that I'd get shivers like these due to my sister's behaviour.....!

"What are you saying, Aki-kun. Isn't university 'University'? Wouldn't it be weird to wear 'School' swimsuit?"

"That's great.....! That's really great.....! Even my sister, who obviously has no common sense whatsoever, is saying that I lack common sense. I'll just laugh it away.....!"

We nearly spread a wrong Japanese culture to foreigners.

"Although I don't really understand, but does it make you feel relaxed?"

"Yes. I feel relaxed."

"If so, put my swimsuit back into the bag. Showing it to everyone makes me feel embarrassed."

"That's not right! Change it! Change the swimsuit! I can't accept this kind of things as your brother!"

"What you're trying to say is, this swimsuit isn't revealing enough?"

"Aaaaaah just do as you please regarding that! Just go to a beach shop or somewhere else and get a new swimsuit!"

"My, Aki-kun is really perverted and noisy. Why don't you learn from the calm Kouta-kun?"

"…...Akihisa. Be responsible of your pervertedness."

"Wuaaa, Yuuji! I've been called H by Muttsurini!"

"Don't cry, Akihisa. Sometimes you call others 'idiot' too."

"I object! I'll never have my stupidity placed on the same level as Muttsurini's pervertedness!"

I'm just not as skilled in learning as everyone!

"Meh, it's really rare for Aki-kun to say this, I'll just change my swimsuit then. After all the chest area is a little tight."

"…...(*drip**drip**drip*--nosebleed)"

If nee-san wasn’t driving I’d really like to grab her head and let her see the passenger seat.

“Enough……there won’t be any problem if nee-san is more self-conscious……”

I’d never thought that I’d be this tired just being on the car going to the beach.

Three hours passed while we’re in the car.

At the end of this long journey, we've reached the pension. It's a good place surrounded by lush greenery where we can taste the damp air.

“Wow……the scenery is breathtaking……”

“Awesome~The breeze is so comfortable……”

“……Good scenery.”

“Sunny days are great~”

The girls who’d stepped off the car exclaimed.

Since we’re on top of a high hill, the vision’s clearer. Although the buildings were ancient, but it had already fulfilled the best conditions to enjoy the summer.

“Next. What’re we going to do? Are we going to the beach after we’ve placed our baggage?”

“Right. I somehow feel like swimming just by looking at it.”

“……(*gulp**gulp*--swallowing saliva)”

What is so enticing about the summer ocean. By just looking at it from afar, you'll feel eager to change into swimming attire and rush towards the vast sea, it's just unbelievable.

"We'll put our baggage in our room first then we'll go to the beach."

"""Yes--"""

We changed our clothes once it was decided, after twenty minutes.

"Guess we are the ones waiting for them."

"It can't be helped. It takes awhile for them to prepare their swimsuits."

"…...That's great since I also need some time to prepare my tools."

Three guys waiting at the beach for girls to get changed. Even nee-san who is usually fast needs to prepare a new swimsuit, now they'll be slower.

We got under the shade of the parasol leisurely, and suddenly we heard an odd conversation from afar.

"…...Ooo. Akihisa and the guys are over there. Hey--. You guys--"

"You, you! What're you doing!?"

"Hmm? Oh, it's the lifeguard. Why is your expression so weird?"

"It's not 'why'! Why aren't you wearing anything on top?"

"???What are you talking about, boy's swimsuits are usually topless."

"It's already wrong for a girl to wear boy's swimsuit! Just come here!"

"Wait, just wait! I'm a boy so it should be fine."

"As long as I'm alive, I will not allow such inadequacy here! Not only that there're a lot of children here, there're also scary guys too!"

"That's why you're mistaken! Just listen to me first--"

"If you're not going to wear a shirt, then you're forbidden to enter the swimming area! You're not allowed to take it off there too! I will keep watch with binoculars from afar!"

"I'm telling you to wait--"

I feel that the faint sound is similar to Hideyoshi's.....Am I mistaken?

Everyone's so slow, I guess I'll just do some warm-ups to kill time.

"But this time, it's all thanks to Akira-nee-san."

That moment, Yuuji spoke while looking at the sea.

"Hmm? About the car?"

"That's one reason, but I’m talking about the 'impure heterosexual relationships are forbidden'. All thanks for that, Shouko have to patiently wait, I'm saved."

"Ahah, that. I think that's only for me....."

Also, nee-san probably thinks that Yuuji and Shouko are engaged.

"No, please let it be aimed at everyone. It's better this way."

"Eh~? How should I do it~?"

Just this once let me make things difficult for him.

Being begged for help by this fellow, I have no idea why I never want to promise him immediately, that's weird.

"Anything, just say what you want to say. but you'll get your retribution soon."

"Retribution?"

"By disclosing that time when you and Shimada kissed."

"I swear to God that I won't speak lightly."

I'm obviously not a heartless guy that will turn a blind eye to a friend's sincere plea.

"About that, there's another one about you getting a peck on the cheek."

"Oeh!?"

How, how did he know about it!? That time, there's only me and Himeji-san on the rooftop so it's impossible that someone had seen it!?

"No, no! The one at the rooftop, it has to be Himeji-san just greeting me! Ever since that time Himeji-san's attitude did not change, I couldn't gather the courage to ask--"

"Huh? Himeji? I thought it's the one with Shimada's little sister?"

"…...Akihisa. What rooftop?"

"…….."

What should I do now? I think I just made a mistake that cannot be remedied.

"Hey, Akihisa. Are you hiding anything fun from me?"

"No no no no. There's nothing. It's just that I had dreamt of that before."

"I see. Then it'll be fine for me to ask Himeji about it?"

"Odabeba."

"Although I don't know which planet that language comes from, but I understand that you're trying to convey 'Please don't'."

"That's great that you understand....."

It may be so, but I still don't understand the meaning of Himeji-san's gesture. It might be on the cheek, but a kiss is still a kiss. I doubt that she'll do this to a person she doesn't have a feeling for. But.....

"She said that, my first love is still going strong....."

"Hmm? What did you say then?"

"Ah, nothing at all. I wonder who is Himeji-san's first love."

I'm also a man. Although I'm slightly oblivious, but I will still think if Himeji-san has feelings for me. But, thinking from the 'my first love is still going strong' that I heard, it seems impossible.

"Himeji-san's first love? You can't even tell that it's actually you?"

"Ahaha. If so I'll die happily."

"…...Am I wrong?"

"Wrong~…...I remember during my primary school days, Himeji-san herself denied....."

Since it's my memory, it highly possible that there're some weird parts.

"I see. Urm, it's no use being concerned of the past."

"Yes. Ahaha."

"…...Compared with this, that kissing part is more important."

"Absolutely."

Grr.....! Muttsurini. You are usually silent but now.....!

"Ah--….. About that, actually--"

As I was thinking about how to slip past this and going to open my mouth

"….....!(*blink**blink*)"

Both of Muttsurini's eyes shone. And his hands are already grabbing four cameras. I guess the girls are here. Just in time.

"Look. Everyone is here. When we talk about the ocean we think of girls in swimsuits!"

"Tch. He got away."

"….....Anyway, take photos."

Muttsurini fiddled with the four cameras skillfully. I'm afraid that he's adjusting backlight correction or focus correction until his cameras are perfect. Such an unfathomable person.

"Thanks for waiting. Sorry that it took us some time to change."

The one who spoke energetically was Kudou Aiko-san. She's wearing pants that looked like a miniskirt with slanted stripes for her lower body, and an ordinary swimsuit for the upper body, but its size was very different from the Swimming Club's swimsuit, and it's making me feel troubled as the sunburn marks on her shoulder and abdomen were very noticeable. Now that's 'summer', wearing a straw hat that made us feel that, and it's really cute and suit her.

"I guess you're really from the Swimming Club. The swimsuit and hat really do suit you."

"You think so? Thanks, Sakamoto-kun……hmm?"

"……(*blink**blink*)"

"Ahaha. My, Muttsurini-kun. If you want to take pictures of my swimsuit just do it in front of me. I've always told you that I won't get mad, right?"

"……Don't get too far ahead of yourself, Kudou Aiko."

"…I have no interest in your swimsuit (platter splatter)—I've just got heatstroke."

"Ohh, you worked hard, Muttsurini. That's 28 seconds."

"Amazing, Muttsurini. You've managed to create a new record for enduring a nosebleed."

“Yoshii-kun, Sakamoto-kun. Don’t be so heartless, hurry up and save him…”

Kudou-san got closer to Muttsurini while worrying about his nosebleed that’s pouring like a tap.

“Ah, Kudou-san. If you go too close to him now—”

“…The sunlight got stronger…! (Platter Splatter)”

“Eh? Wa, wait a sec, Muttsurini-kun!? Muttsurini-kun!? Are you alright!? Your nosebleed’s like a fountain now!?”

“…Heatstrokes are hard to treat recently. (Shooosh)”

“This isn’t some kind of heatstroke but a new kind of illness, is it?”

That’s really amazing. It’s impossible to bleed that much even if we cut the carotid pulse. As expected, we can’t stand around seeing such a nosebleed.

I got over to Muttsurini, who collapsed, and talked to him slowly.

“Muttsurini.”

“……Akihisa…”

“…Your last words…”

“What are you saying, Yoshii-kun!? That’s very ominous here, you know!?”

“…When I’m reborn, I wish to become a bird…”

“Don’t just follow him, Muttsurini-kun! You’ll be saved!”

“…And then, I hope to see lots of things inside the girls' changing room from the outside…”

“And you want to do that in your rebirth!? At least understand your cause of death in this life!”

Muttsurini left with a smile on his bleeding face. You died believing in your own

beliefs. I've received your will.

"Sorry to keep you waiting."

"…Kept you waiting."

This time, it was Himeji-san and Kirishima-san, who came later than Kudou-san. The swimsuits I saw looked similar to the ones I saw at the swimming pool…but for some reason, the change of scenery gave a completely different impression.

"…Aiko, don't bully Tsuchiya too much."

"No, I didn't do anything…"

Kirishima-san said to Kudou-san as she saw Muttsurini collapsed on the floor. She didn't seem to understand why Muttsurini's having nosebleed all over the place.

"That's not it, Shouko-chan. Tsuchiya-kun got excited that Kudou-san looks so cute in the swimsuit. Right, Tsuchiya-kun?"

"…I don't admit that fact."

Muttsurini continued to deny it even in his dying breath. How dishonest.

"…Excited?"

"Yes. Tsuchiya-kun's a boy after all."

On hearing Himeji-san's words, Kirishima-san nodded and walked slowly to Yuuji.

"…Yuuji."

"Hm? What is it, Shouko?"

"…Eii (Poke)"

"GWAH!!!? (Puoosshhh)"

And so, Kirishima-san's silverfish-like fingers were stabbed into Yuuji's nostrils,

and there was a nosebleed like a spring.

“…That’s good.”

“WHAT’S GOOD ABOUT THAT!? WHAT’S WITH THAT OUT OF A SUDDEN!? (SPLATTERR)”

“…Because you’re not excited even after seeing me in a swimsuit, Yuuji.”

I see. So that’s why she used violence. In that case, it couldn’t be helped.

But I think the nosebleed’s big enough even without doing such a thing.

“Kirishima-san and Himeji-san are both so pretty…and have nice figures…”

“Eh…!? A, Akihisa-kun!? Call, calling me pretty, it’s rather embarrassing…”

“Wah!? So, sorry! I accidentally said it out!”

Himeji-san looked like she was about to pull her pareo as she curled back.

I didn’t intend to say it. I just blurted it out accidentally!

“Hm. My figure’s not good anyway.”

This time, there seemed to be an annoyed voice from behind. It’s Minami.

“A, arre? You’ve changed already, Minami? It looks different from before…”

I looked behind, and though I couldn’t see everything as I’m wearing a hat, but Minami’s one-piece swimsuit was different from before…besides, wasn’t that a competitive swimsuit?

“Th, this is because, I want to swim properly for once! You see, I ate a lot of ice cream and drank lots of juice recently, so I put on weight already…!”

“Eh? But Minami? Didn’t you say that your chest got skinnier because you slacked around during the summer on the car?”

“My, my chest got skinnier, but my thighs got bigger—argh, I’m an idiot! Why must I emphasize on this!”

Minami ended off with these powerful words as she covered her face and sighed.

“Is, is that so? I couldn’t tell at all.”

“That’s enough, Aki…I’m of a traditional Japanese physique…even though I grew up in Germany…”

No matter what she says, I do feel that Minami’s rather charming. I guess it’s most suitable to call her a skinny beauty, the kind of fashion model that will appear in the news…but those people don’t have breasts after all.

As I’m wondering what to do, the person I feared most appeared.

“Eh? What is it, Minami-san? Why are you sitting at such a place? Did my stupid brother do something rude to you?”

The one standing right behind Minami, holding a swim ring is my sister, Yoshii Akira herself.

“Ah, it’s alright, Akira-san. I’m just grumbling a little here—hey…”

Minami turned to the owner of the voice…and just froze there.

“Minami-san?”

“…Sobs”

“Minami-san, why are you crying when you see me?”

“That’s enough…I, I can’t beat Mizuki and Akira-san ever in a lifetime…”

“???”

Nee-san tilted her head, seemingly unable to understand Minami’s words.

But speaking of which—

“That’s great…it’s really great that nee-san chose an ordinary swimsuit…”

Nee-san’s wearing a normal bikini that can be seen anywhere. There’s nothing weird about it. My heart’s finally within me again…!

“You don’t have to worry that much, Aki-kun. There’s no suitable size, so I don’t really have many options.”

“Wait, nee-san. What would you choose if you have a choice?”

And that weird tone of yours sounds like you can’t tell the difference between an ordinary and non-ordinary swimsuit.

“…Akira-san.”

“Yes, what is it, Shouko-san?”

“…Just a moment, please excuse me.”

Swoop.

Kirishima-san’s action seemed to create this word-like sound.

“? What is it, Shouko-san?”

“…Amazing…”

For some reason, Kirishima-san trembled after grabbing my sister’s breasts.

“Ah, Akira-san. Please excuse me too!”

And then, Himeji-san grabbed nee-san’s waist from the back.

“???Mizuki-san. What are you doing?”

“…No…nothing at all…it’s nothing…”

Himeji-san answered weakly and left nee-san quietly—and went over to Minami before sitting down in the same manner.

“…Sobs…”

“Ah, Mizuki…welcome…”

“Minami-chan…the sea’s, really cruel…”

“No, Mizuki. I think the cruel one is definitely God…”

Minami, whose eyes looked completely lifeless, gently cuddled Himeji-san.

Well, what’s with this funeral-like mode.

“Alright, everyone, pull yourself together. The last one is here, right?”

Kudou-san seemed like she’s trying to shake off this mood as she cheerily looked away. Her stare’s targeted at Hideyoshi, who’s walking here slowly.

“Sorry everyone…looks like I’m the last one…”

Hideyoshi sounds rather depressed compared to the weather above his head.

“What is it, Hideyoshi-kun? You look very listless.”

“Yeah. You even said energetically before this that ‘I’ll show you my most manly side!’”

“Please just let me go…”

The depressed Hideyoshi is wearing a T-shirt I’ve never seen before on his swimsuit for some reason.

“You actually prepared a watermelon and a bat. That’s a nice decision you made, Akihisa.”

“Of course we need to play Watermelon Splitting. I iced it before, so it’ll definitely taste great.”

“…Nice to drink when it’s a hot weather. Looking forward to it.”

After swimming around for a while, the three of us guys here are carrying the watermelon and the bat from the pension.

“Speaking of which, it’s almost noon. We have to prepare lunch besides the watermelon too.”

“Eh? Isn’t there a lot of salt water?”

“In a certain sense, it’s amazing that you can make such a reply…”

“…I never thought you’ll live until now.”

Ahh, that’s right. It’s because nee-san’s around that I’ve been able to eat well.

“If we can create some fire, it’ll be interesting to pick some shells.”

“Oh, that’s a nice idea. We can add time to the miso soup for flavoring.”

“Then, it’ll be the seaside staples of fried noodles, curry rice, fried squid’s good too—hm? What is it, Muttsurini?”

“…There.”

On hearing Yuuji’s question, Muttsurini pointed at nee-san and the rest far away. What now? It looks like they’re talking with some people here. Does nee-san have acquaintances here?

“These are such cute girls~ what? Where are you from?”

“Ah, no. We’re, well…”

“We have our friends over there too. Want to play together? How about that pretty big sis over there?”

Himeji-san sounds rather troubled. Is this what I think…?

“They’re trying to hook up. Those girls have quite some looks, so it can’t be helped, but it’s really troublesome.”

“…Shall I eliminate them?”

I don’t know when Muttsurini readied the stungun as he gets into position. That

weapon will cause a great tragedy if it’s not used wisely at the seaside.

“Ahh, well…we’re going to do it, right? It’s faster that way—”

“No, it’s fine even if we leave them alone.”

I stop Muttsurini and Yuuji as they try to hurry over. I don’t think there’s a need to really go over, and it’ll be bad if the combination of seawater and stungun happens. It’ll be better to not do any unnecessary things and watch.

“Hm? It’s fine? Why?”

“Himeji-san and the rest needs worry, but nee-san’s around. She’ll probably deal with them nicely.”

Nee-san’s abnormally attractive to those who don’t know her true nature, so she should know how to deal with those people trying to hook up with her. It’s fine.

“I’m really sorry, but we refuse.”

I can hear my sister’s voice from afar, that firm tone that would not allow herself to be forced by the other side. Hm. In that case, it’ll be fine if we don’t come out.

“Eh? Why? You have a boyfriend?”

Even so, they’re not such nice people who’ll leave just like this. They continue to harass them. Well, it’s not that I can’t understand if anyone sees how nee-san and the rest look.

In the face of such opponents, my sister makes a serious reply. Since they’re just trying to hook up, I guess there’s no need to treat them as opponents seriously.

“No. I don’t have a boyfriend.”

“Eh? You don't? Lucky♪. Follow us then.”

“I don’t have a boyfriend, but I have a younger brother.”

Hm? Brother? Is she referring to me? I don’t think such an excuse can be a rejection…

“Huh? A younger brother? What’s so special about that? I have a brother too, you know?”

As I expected, the opponent won’t back away because of such a thing. A younger brother’s different from a boyfriend, and even though she has a younger brother, it’s not a problem. Seriously, how is nee-san going to use this as an excuse to reject those people trying to hook up with her.

“Don’t look down on him. My brother’s relationship with me isn’t ordinary.”

“Heh? Not ordinary? What do you mean?”

“I can’t say it out loudly. Actually…(gloop gloop)”

“PER…PERVERT!!!”

Wait wait wait. What just happened!?

“Also, every day, we’ll…(buzz buzz)”

“DOES, DOES JAPANESE LAW ALLOW FOR THAT KIND OF THING!?”

I can sense that person trying to hook up shaking from afar. What in the world did my sister say to him!? Not good! If I don’t stop it soon, it’ll become really unbelievable!

I hurriedly rush over there. There’s a tingling premonition ringing inside me.

“No, it’s too early for you to be shocked. Also, based on my brother’s requests, I’ll even use a (buzz) or (gloop)— ”

“ARE YOU FOR REAL…!? PLEASE DON’T CAUSE THE COMMON SENSE WITHIN ME TO COLLAPSE…!!”

“Hold on a moment, nee-san! What are you saying!?”

“Ugh!? Ne, *‘nee-san’*…? You mean this guy—”

“Well, I don’t know what you heard, but it’s all a misunderstanding.”

“YOU, YOU APPEARED! YOU DEMONIC PERVERTED LITTLE BROTHER—!! YOU’RE A BEAST THAT DOESN’T CARE ABOUT GENDER OR RELATIVES!!”

“HOLD ON A MOMENT! DON’T RUN AWAY WITH SUCH A MISUNDERSTANDING! I BEG OF YOU, PLEASE WAIT!!”

The guy hurriedly ran away. What should I do…I, probably won’t be able to use the bathhouse at this seaside next year…

“Seriously. That kind of person really troubles me a lot.”

“To me, you’re the most troublesome one, nee-san…”

It’s really great that there’s a huge difference in age between me and my sister. If I end up having to go to the same school with this kind of sister, I’ll definitely become a kid who won’t go to school.

“Akihisa-kun, a little to the right!”

“Not there, Aki. It’s to the left!”

“Yoshii-kun, forward!”

I can only rely on everyone’s voices as I have a cloth tied around my eyes, covering my sight as I walk towards the watermelon. Normally, I’ll definitely trust Himeji-san’s suggestion, but when my eyes are sealed, I can’t tell if that’s the real Himeji-san or Hideyoshi’s mimicry. No, maybe Hideyoshi’s mimicking Minami. In that case, Minami may be lying to be to fool me, but it’s dangerous to think that way too.

“Aki-kun. Turn 32 degrees to the left, walk 4.7m straight in that direction.”

“…Akihisa. It’s actually the other way.”

I can hear nee-san and Muttsurini’s voices. However, everyone’s saying things while directing me to completely different directions, so I can’t tell which one is the correct one. In that case, everyone’s just leaking fake information to me, right?

In that case, I’ll just trust Yuuji’s suggestion. He’ll give fake information instead of telling the truth—that guy will say the truth while pretending to do that. With that, I’ll be able to tell where the watermelon is…!

I prick my ears to look for Yuuji’s voice. Then, what will he tell me…?

“…Yuuji. How’s this swimsuit…?”

“Even if you ask me how, I’ve seen it before. No feelings about it.”

“…You definitely didn’t look at it properly. Look closely.”

“Oi! Don’t touch me in such a getup! You’re touching me in a lot of places!”

“…Don’t worry.”

…Hoho. I see.

I gather the information I got and draw a map in my mind. The target's 47 degrees behind me on the left, 3.4m straight down the path. If I know where the place is, I won't hesitate in my actions again. Then, I'll just have to swing the bat down at full strength.

"DDDIIIIIIIIEEEEE!!!!"

"UUUWWWWOOOHHHH!! That was close—!!"

Damn! It doesn't feel like I hit! I missed!

"Ahh, sorry Yuuji. I mixed you up with the watermelon."

After saying that, I take off the cloth covering my tablecloth.

The bat landed several millimetres in front of Yuuji. That bastard…! He managed to dodge it at the last minute…!

"I'd say, Akihisa…you obviously went right over at Yuuji after hearing his voice, right…?"

"Ahaha, what are you saying, Hideyoshi? That's a huge misunderstanding."

I definitely won't admit such a thing.

"…Well, don't mind, Hideyoshi. Akihisa's just looking for the watermelon. Right, Akihisa?"

"Yeah, that's right."

I immediately agreed with Yuuji. The guess that 'he wanted to beat Yuuji for having a passionate hug with the pretty Kirishima-san' really hurts me. I'm a very forgiving and understanding person here.

"Then, it's my turn. Akihisa. Hand me the bat."

"No no. What are you saying? Haven't you been failing all this time?"

"Don't say that, Akihisa. Didn't everyone go through a round before this? It's the second round now, isn't it? Shouldn't it be my turn?"

“No no no. I think it’s fair to go the other way at the second of the second round. Let me challenge again.

We continue to grab onto the bat tightly while smiling at each other. It’ll be over if I step aside here. I’ll lose the chance to cease this guy’s breathing.

“We, well, Akihisa-kun, Sakamoto-kun. It’ll be a pity to smash this rare watermelon. I think we’ll end the watermelon splitting here…”

““Don’t worry, the watermelon definitely won’t be crushed (here).””

“You guys, what are you planning on hitting…”

We’ll see after we beat it.

The bloody Watermelon Splitting finally ended peacefully. It’s now noon.

The guys brought the watermelon over, so this time, the girls are to buy fried noodles and curry.

“I say, Yuuji.”

“What is it?”

“My shoulders feel a lot lighter.”

“What a coincidence, me too.”

The irritating feeling we had since just now disappeared completely. As expected, that’s…

“The jealous stares due to the girls have disappeared, right?”

“Yeah. Really, those were troublesome.”

It’s eyecatching when beauties are around, but the guys beside them will have it

a little tough. I guess they're definitely thinking that the standards between the guys and girls are different.

"Eh? Speaking of which, where's Muttsurini?"

"Ahh. He said that he's going somewhere to clean the camera lens."

"Fm~m. He dirtied it with his nosebleed again, right?"

"Even so, he was running all over the place."

"Well, that's the guy called the Silent Pervert."

Yuuji and I talk as we look around each other. We think about couples when we talk about seasides, but when we look at things for real here…

"It's really unexpected to have an all-female group here."

"Hm? That's true. But as there're guys trying to hook up, it's to be expected to have women getting hooked up."

"That's true."

Hooking up, hooking up…I always thought this kind of thing only happens in light novels or manga. I didn't expect them to appear right beside me…

"Sorry to keep both of you waiting. We're back."

"Wel, welcome back. You spent quite some time. Were there a lot of people?"

As I was spacing out, the girls carrying different foods and drinks came back.

"No, it's not that there were a lot of people…"

Hideyoshi mused unhappily as he carries a plastic juice bottle. Did something happen?

"People approached us again."

"Huh? Again?"

Most likely, it’s because there were only girls. It’s better for us to go with them after all. We shouldn’t have listened to them saying “Because you guys brought the watermelon.”

“Minami-chan and Shouko-chan were bullied quite a lot especially just now. It was really annoying.”

Himeji-san gave a wry look at Minami and Kirishima-san.

“Really, this is the one thing I really~ can’t deal with…”

“…I’m, scared too.”

Those two who were harassed showed tired expressions.

“Well~ that was tough on you.”

“Can’t you just deal with them using your normal strength?”

Yuuji and I reach our hands out to grab the things in both people’s hands.

“Hey hey, that kind of attitude won’t do, Yoshii-kun, Sakamoto-kun.”

PAK. Kudou-san reached her hands out to grab our hands.

“Even if you say that it’s this kind of attitude we’re showing…”

“What’s not right about it?”

“What’s not right—haa…you two really don’t understand a woman’s heart…”

Kudou-san gives an exaggerated expression as she says.

I find that there should be no problems with nee-san around…an unhappy voice butts in before I can say that.

“Aki, are you saying that you won’t mind even if I’m troubled?”

“I find that a little cold, Akihisa-kun.”

“Ah, no, I don’t mean it that way…”

Minami and Himeji-san are looking right at me. I don’t have that intention, but just that I find that there’s no need to worry…

“…Yuuji.”

“Hm?”

“…Yuuji, you should be more jealous and worried.”

“I’m worrying in my own way OW OW OW! Hold on a moment! I don’t understand what you want from me!”

“…I’ll teach you until you understand…bodily.”

“GUUUAAAHHHH!!!”

Kirishima-san is showing her feelings in a straightforward manner as she angrily unleashed her rage on Yuuji.

“Yeah. Aki and the rest should be more worried about us.”

“Yeah…it doesn’t feel too good if they’re not even a little jealous…”

“Then, let’s make him worry a little. Maybe he'll understand.”

“Okay, let’s try to be a little bad.”

“Hm? What’s the matter, Himeji-san, Minami?”

Minami and Himeji-san beside me are muttering something to each other. What are they talking about?

“Hey, Mizuki. It’s not good if such people pop up randomly.”

“Right. It’s not good.”

Why must Minami and Himeji-san say such things to me?

“EH? Do you often get requests, Minami, Himeji-san?”

I never heard of it up till now.

“Yeah. Well, there’s a lot of times!”

“Yes. Well, anytime!”

Both of them emphasized this in a weird way.

“But your reactions just now don’t seem like you’re used to it…”

“Tha, that’s not true! We’re so scared that we couldn’t even let out our voices!”

“Tha, that’s right! It’s like what Mizuki said! You’re unable to understand when you’re an airhead and have no luck with love!”

Ugh. How rude, calling me an airhead and having no chance with love.

“That’s not true! Even if I want to hook up some girls, it’s rather easy—”

“Akihisa-kun, what do you mean by easy?”

“Aki? What’s easy?”

Why is it that I feel that I’ll be killed if I say that ‘I can easily do something like hooking up girls’?

“Well, easy, as in…”

“Are you saying that you can do it? Akihisa-kun?”

“What are you saying, Aki? It’s impossible for you to get any girls, right?”

“Mm.”

“That’s right. It’s not like you to go get some girls, and it’s impossible for you to do so. You can’t bluff.”

“Mmm.”

“Aki-kun. People have things they’re suited and not suited to do. You’re not suited for love at all, so I think that your relationships with the other gender will only be at the friend level.”

“Mmmm.”

Even nee-san interrupted as she eavesdrops on us.

It’s really pitiful of me to be told off like that. Even I can still try to get girls…!

“…Even you too, Yuuji. You don’t understand what girls think…that’s why you’re not popular.”

“Ku…! You actually said it…!”

Yuuji groaned as Kirishima-san pinched his face. It’s amazing that he can still talk in such a situation.

“Really, you have to reflect on this, Akihisa-kun, Sakamoto-kun? Prez too, forgive them for this. The drinks we bought will become warm, you know?”

On hearing Kudou-san’s words, Kirishima-san grudgingly lets go of Yuuji’s face.

(Damn it, I just can’t accept it.)

(Yeah. It’s ridiculous that they’re angry at us.)

I grumbled to Yuuji, who’s released. Did we really do something to anger them?

(And they’re throwing tantrums over how they’re being pursued? Why are they calling us cold-hearted? Impossible.)

(Yeah. They’re just blindly saying that I’m not suitable for love. If I show my stuff, I can do—)

Anything. As I was about to say this, I see something around my friend. That’s…a rare scene Muttsurini coming back while holding a camera and talking to unfamiliar people. Who’s he talking to?

“I say, you’re holding a good camera.”

“…???”

“If possible, can you take a photo of me too?”

“…Sure, no problems.”

“Really? Thank you.”

“Ah, that’s right, Have a picture with us too♪ How about a summer memory?”

“Ahaha. That’s fine too. This kid looks rather cute.”

“GUOH!”

“Wha, what is it, Akihisa!? What did you just see!?”

A blood-cough inducing scene happens right in front of me.

How, how is that possible…! Such a…thing…!

“Pull yourself through, Akihisa! What did you just see!?”

“He…hooked up…”

“Huh? What are you saying?”

“Muttsurini…got hooked up, by some girls…!”

“Har? What nonsense are you saying. At least say something with common sense when you dream—”

“Wow. You’re really a photography genius, you know!?”

“Amazing! It’s well taken!”

“…Just, an ordinary skill.”

“You’re at it again. You’re rather cute when you’re shy.”

“GUOAH!!”

Blood came out of Yuuji's mouth.

"Im, impossible…! Why, not us but Muttsurini…!"

"Impossible, this is impossible…"

Unbelievable. No, I don't want to believe!

"…Well, Yuuji."

"What…?"

"If, just if."

"Yeah."

That's right. One out of ten thousand. One out of hundred million. I find it impossible, and it's definitely an illusion, but maybe—

"Are we the only ones amongst the gang who haven't had anyone hooking up to us…!?"

"Don, don't say such stupid things! How can there be such a thing!"

"Tha, that's right! That's impossible! What am I saying!"

"Right!? At least think some more no matter how stupid you are!"

Yuuji and I let out dry laughter as we break out cold sweat. Right. I'm just thinking too much! Ahaha, ahahahaha.

…….But.

"Then, why hasn't anyone talked to us."

"Gu…"

The girls got talked to twice in such a short time. If that's the case, we can say that there's a difference in acceptance levels between guys and girls…but it's completely different if even Muttsurini's talked up by a girl.

“As expected, it’s just like what nee-san said. I’m a kid no one likes…”

At that time, I had been thinking that I might be popular if I’m a little taller and build up some muscles. So it can’t work…?

“No no, calm down, Akihisa. Leaving aside the girls, doesn’t Muttsurini look silent and harmless on first glance? He’s just easy to talk to.”

“Well, it’s true that Muttsurini’s of a completely different type from us.”

If I have to say it, it’s his silence and stealth action.

“Yeah, so it’s too early to decide if we’re popular or not. Leaving aside you, how is it possible for me not to be popular?”

“Ye, yeah. We’re just the types who’re hard to hook up with, so it’s not like we’re not popular at all!”

“That’s right! We haven’t had girls talking to us, but it’s definitely easy for us to hook up girls if we’re serious!”

“That’s right! What do they mean by ‘you have no reason to get hooked up’! I’ll show them!”

“That’s the spirit, Akihisa! Just like that, we’ll show them how we’re like when we’re serious!”

“Yeah! Let’s show everyone how popular we can be when we’re serious! I won’t let them think that we’re not popular!”

“Right right!”

As so, Yuuji and I head to the beach to hook up some girls to protect our prides.

And after that, when we looked back at it, we—could only call ourselves mad at that time.

“Speaking of which…have you ever hooked up someone before, Yuuji?”

“Not at all.”

“Me too…”

Yuuji and I are looking for targets on the beach. We’ll only create quarrels with guys around, so we aim for girls only groups. Also, if there’re two of them, the number will be just right. The problem will be about ‘how should we begin’.

“But you don’t have to worry about that so much, Akihisa. Just follow those that succeed and we’ll be fine.”

“Follow? As in, we imitate those we see?”

“Yeah, that’s right.”

Imitate, imitate…

“Then, from who?”

“Didn’t you see it just now? How Muttsurini got hooked up by girls?”

“Ah. That’s right. That looks like a successful example.”

Even though the other party was the one that approached them, a success is a success, and this a big success. We’re not *the same type as him* (this is very important), and even if we can’t do so, we’ll be able to hook up successfully if we follow what he does.

“In other words, aim for those who intend to take photos?”

“Yeah. There’re a lot of people who want to leave some memories at a tourist spot. We’ll just have to look for a group with girls only and have cameras.”

Fm fm, I see. It’s really a great idea.

“But will there be a group who’ll agree to our request like that?”

“Isn’t the first step of trying to hook up the first step? There’s no other way. Let’s do it before talking.”

“Well, you’re right.”

First, we look around the coast. There…doesn’t seem to be such a group around. A group of girls intending to take photos…

“Any luck, Akihisa?”

“None…none at all…what about you?”

“Me too.”

Yuuji and I have our eyes widened like plates as we look for targets.

We can’t find such a nice group.

“It’s not that easy after all.”

“Trying to hook up is probably like this. Don’t mind. Just find the type of person that matches your interests. It should be rather easy after that.”

“Yeah. There’s nothing difficult besides looking for targets.”

We continue to look around as we move. If we can find anyone that fits us, we’ll just talk to them by saying ‘do you mind us taking photos for you’? And then, we’ll ask subtlely ‘where’re you from’ to continue the conversation. If we can create a start to this conversation, things will proceed smoothly. That’s right, the biggest problem is to find the chance to talk.

And then, as I consider this, I think,

The biggest problem is ‘how to find a chance to talk’. Then—how about someone else continues instead of the person talking? What should the person do? With what?

“…Maybe…”

The one who’s approaching should have rather different conditions from the one continuing the conversation. Besides, there’s no problem for the first person to start the conversation, but it’ll be disadvantageous if the other person tries to talk. In the worst case, one side will fail, while the other side will succeed.

Things will probably end up like that.

I really like the situation where I succeed while Yuuji fails. That will be the best situation.

—But, if, just if, what if that situation's reversed…! The thought alone is scary.

"…"

I look aside, and Yuuji looks like he's thinking about a plan too. Is that guy thinking about the same thing as me…?

"Wha, what is it, Akihisa? What's with that 'I feel this is a bad situation' look on your face?"

"Ah, ahaha. What are you saying, Yuuji? It's just your imagination. You're giving that 'I'm going to get mine stolen' look on your face too, you know?"

"Don, don't say such stupid things. I never thought about such a thing in my mind up till now in this life of mine."

Yuuji and I grin at each other.

Yeah. It's not good to steal. It's really stupid to break friendships just to hook up with others. Even if I do that, I won't get any—

"I'm taking it then~ Here, a smile. Eh?"

"Hm? What is it?"

"Sorry~ the memory card's full~ I'll delete a few now. Please wait~"

"Really, you should have said so earlier~"

""UOOOOHHHH!!!""

On hearing that, we immediately sprinted on the beach. My body, please be as light as a feather now!

“YOU BASTARD, AKIHISA! WHY ARE YOU RUNNING SO FAST!? JUST RUN BEHIND ME!”

“WHY ARE YOU RUNNING SO FAST, YUUJI!? IT’S UGLY TO SEE YOU UNCOMPOSED! YOU’RE FAR BELOW ME, SO JUST FOLLOW ME FROM BEHIND! I’LL START THE CONVERSATION FIRST!”

“NO~! I DON’T BELIEVE IN WHATEVER YOU DO! LEAVE IT TO ME HERE!”

“KUH! YOU WISH!”

Yuuji and I continue to argue with each other as we dash. We’re not used to running on the beach, and as expected, it’s as hard to run on it as we imagined. But the conditions are equal…! Anyway, hurry up and run…!

“Kept you waiting! I’ll take a photo~”

“Okay~”

“Better take it well this time~”

““UOOHHHH!!!””

We, we made it! They haven’t finished!

Now, I just have to take the photo before Yuuji arrives.

“Hah hah hah…onee-sans…haa haa…you’re very pretty…”

“Hah hah hah…if possible…haa haa…please let me take a photo, haa haa…of you in swimsuits…”

“No…haa haa…I’ll take it…haa haa, for you…haa haa.”

“““…..…”””

☆

“…To think, that they’ll actually call the cops…”

“…What exactly…was wrong with that…”

It was such a rare chance, but those big sisters’ reactions were extremely cold. If it wasn’t for the fact that we made the snap decision to run away, we might be eating pork chop rice in the interrogation room.

“Maybe it’s hard to get into a conversation by asking to take a photo. Look, unlike Muttsurini, that’s no way we’re suited to hold a camera.”

“That’s true. We don’t look like people who’ll take pictures well.”

That’s right. That’s definitely the case. It’s not that we’re not popular.

“Then, let’s change our method of approaching our targets.”

“That’ll be a better idea.”

Yuuji and I aren’t suited to take photos. Then, we might have better luck using another method instead of doing such a thing that requires skill.

“Right! Let’s do this.”

After thinking for a while, Yuuji claps his hands.

“Hm? You thought of a good idea?”

“Yeah. Leave it to me.”

Yuuji stands proudly as he guarantees. As expected of a man reliable in such a situation.

“Listen up, Akihisa. Everyone, not just women alone, like to be praised for being good looking, right?”

“Well, you’re right. They’ll definitely not be angry if they’re praised.”

“So, we’ll first praise their looks, and then find a chance to be intimate with them. How about it?”

“Ohh, I see. So we praise them for being pretty, right?”

“Ahh. But normal praise alone won’t work. We won’t be able to develop on the topic in that case. Things like ‘you look like an actress’ or ‘like a model’ will work—just say anything that can be a form of praise.”

A metaphor or something, huh? Hm~…in other words, to emphasize on the strong points well? Can I do that?

“Then, let’s practice for a while. Let’s see…as for the girls over there, if you praise them, what will you say to them?”

Yuuji points at a couple walking who look like university students on the beach, the girl; let’s see, she’s rather slim, is wearing shades, and has a nice tan body.

“Looks as cool as a beach volleyball player. How about that?”

“That’s right. I’m thinking about that too. Then, what about there?”

This time, Yuuji points at a big sister under the umbrella. She’s wearing a white parka on top and a pareo at the bottom. Let’s see, as for that person…

“looks like she’s a princess avoiding the heat here.”

“Yeah. You’re right. I feel the same.”

I see. So that’s how we praise someone. Now that we learn how to do so, this might work.

“Not bad. Can we use this strategy?”

“Of course.”

Yuuji nods as he stands up. The tactic’s perfect.

“And so, the problem is the chance to talk—eh?”

Perfect timing. There’re two girls walking in front of us, and they dropped their

towels. This is a rare opportunity!

“We, well, onee-sans! You dropped your towels!”

I immediately call out to them and shout at them. I’m definitely stammering because of thirst, not nervousness!

“Eh? Ah, really. Thanks for helping us pick them up.”

“No no, it’s just a small favor.”

I hand the towel I pick up to the onee-sans. Using this chance, we stare at their faces intently. What can we say about them? What can we praise about them…!

“Well~ speaking of which, you’re rather pretty, onee-sans.”

Yuuji says these appropriate words for now to hold the situation. Now we can find time to look for metaphors.

“Eh? Re, really?”

“What? Are you, trying to approach us?”

The onee-sans didn’t show disgusted looks. It feels good. This chance…we definitely won’t let this chance get away.

I have to notice the parts I should praise appropriately. Yuuji gives me this hint. The good things these two have are is here!

“Well, both of you look good, like models.”

“Me too. Both of you have nice figures.”

Yuuji and I continue to praise them. These two big sisters have large breasts. We have to praise them here.

“Really, such sweet tongues~”

“You’re high school students, right? You’re rather good at trying to talk people up even though you’re not grown up yet.”

The impression they give feels even gentler. It’s perfect up till now. Now, if we can finish it off perfectly with a metaphor.

“No no, this isn’t just some random bluffing.”

“No. we really think of it this way.”

“Yeah, that’s true. Your figures are really great, onee-san, just like—”

We take deep breaths, and say the decisive line in unison.

““JUST LIKE NAKED MODELS IN ERO BOOKS!!””

“…The one on the right must be thinking of conquering the world.”

“…Definitely right. Those two onee-sans will definitely become world champions in the future.”

Right now, our lower jaw and legs are still trembling. This is the first time we’re beaten by women we met for the first time.

Yuuji and I are sitting together at the beach, hugging our knees in as we watch the sunset.

“Eh? Akihisa-kun, Sakamoto-kun? Why weren’t you around just now? What were both of you doing?”

“Wow, your faces are swollen. What exactly happened?”

“…Did you fall?”

Himeji-san, Minami and Kirishima-san are walking by. This, this is bad…it’s too unlucky for us if things are revealed before we can hook up any girl.

“It, it’s nothing, right Yuuji?”

“Oh, ohh…just a little tripover, right, Akihisa?”

“““…”””

The three sets of eyes are staring at us intently. This is dangerous.

“Then, Yuuji, it’s about time to see who swims faster!”

“Yeah, Akihisa! I won’t lose this time!”

“Ahaha. Well, swimming’s fun!”

“Right? Then, let’s begin!”

“Yeah!”

“““……”””

The piercing stares behind us are really painful.

—30 minutes later—

“It was going well just now. Who asked you to say unnecessary things just now, Yuuji!?”

“No~pe, that’s not true! It’s because you spouted nonsense!”

“No! It’s because you ruined it by saying ridiculous things, Yuuji!”

“Don’t try to worm your way out of this, you idiot!”

“What did you say, you piece of scum!?”

After that, we tried talking up several groups, but there were no success at all as the failures continued to pile up.

“…Oi, let’s stop. There’s not going to be an outcome to our arguing.”

“…Yeah, this is meaningless in the first place.”

We put down our hands that were grabbing each other. This isn't the problem now.

"Hey, Akihisa, I just thought of something."

"What?"

"Maybe the reason we didn't succeed is because we weren't going serious just now?"

"You're saying?"

"Those people don't fit our tastes, so we subconsciously kept our strength for failure. Isn't that the case?"

"Eh? Is that so?"

"Ahh, that's the super-ego."

Super-ego. All…it feels really inexplicable to hear such a difficult term as the reason, and sure sounds like it.

"Then, what should we do?"

"Just look for those who're our type?"

Hm…our type…it's tough for me. I don't even understand fully what's the type I like…

"Just kidding. To be honest, it's really too bad to use this as an excuse."

"Well, yeah. It's not like us to say that we didn't do our best at this stage."

"Yeah…right, let's challenge another group like a man, and give up if we fail."

"Yeah, that's right. It's about time for us to head back to everyone."

We're moving at a high pace now, but even so, it's been an hour since we came out. We came out running because we were angry, but it's rare to be here with everyone. It'll be a waste to do such a thing here. Time to give up soon.

“Then, let’s walk around and find people suited to us.”

“Right.”

We step on the sand and walk towards where everyone’s gathered.

It’s because of the people calling the police that we found ourselves running to a rather far place before we knew it. there’s not a lot of people around, and we probably won’t spend much time going back.

“Really…so we’re not popular men in the end. I really don’t want to admit it.”

“Well, I sort of guessed it in the beginning.”

People’s been telling us this since before. These incidents reinforce that fact, so the impact isn’t as great here.

“Let’s treat this as a good lesson—hm?”

“? What is it, Yuuji?”

Yuuji, who has his hands cupped behind his head, suddenly stops. He’s staring at the front. Who’s there.

I follow Yuuji’s stare, and see two girls there.

“Heh~ those are nice cute girls~”

The two girls look rather tall and slender. They should be of our ages, right?

“The final battle will be against those two!”

Yuuji says excitedly to me.

One of them is a nice beauty with thin eyes and chestnut-colored hair tied at the back, while the other one is a cute girl with hair left at the waist. I don’t know their figures as they’re wearing parkas and haoris, but at least we know that they don’t look too fat or too skinny.

“Well, these people are most suited as our final opponents.”

It can’t be helped if we fail against that kind of opposition. It’s best if we want to make a retreat here.

“Then, let’s go. Oii, those two!”

After saying that, Yuuji immediately runs over to those two. He sure looks rather motivated. Do they suit his tastes?

In order not to lose the chance, I too follow Yuuji as I strut over.

“Eh? What is it?”

“Is there something?”

We hear their responses. It sounds different from the cold impression they give. Both of them sound really cute, and for some reason, a little unexpected.

“Ah…well, we came to the seaside to play, so we got lost.”

There aren’t people around, so we’re asking for help like lost kids. It looks like this is the plan. I see, let me help out here.

“Then, we’re looking for the sea. Do you know where it is?”

My voice sounds weird because I’m too tense. Uu…I did it several times, but maybe I’m not suited to do this kind of thing…

“Eh? The sea. I think you can see it from here, no?”

“You’re weird~ are you thinking of approaching us?”

Giggles. Both of them laughed. Huh? That’s an unexpectedly nice impression.

“It can’t be helped then. We’ll bring you to the seaside. Let’s hold hands. We’ll bring you there.”

After saying that, the chestnut-colored hair girl grabs Yuuji’s hand.

“Eh? Ahh, no! We’re not saying that you have to do this!”

Yuuji is flabbergasted by the sudden intimate action. I guess he’s shocked by the

unexpected development.”

“Then, let me hold your hand and lead you there too.”

The other person speaks up too. For some reason, she trembles and reaches her hand out to me.

“EH? The, there’s no need for you to do this just for me, right?”

I can’t help but take a step away.

Wha, what’s with this situation? What’s going on? Is this where they contact the yakuza to drag us to a no-man-place and deal with us there?

I look at the person’s face, trying my best to understand her intention, but the eyes hidden under the bangs aren’t looking at me, so I can’t tell what she’s thinking. She sounds energetic, but is very introverted.

“Don’t be scared, alright? Let’s hold hands~”

After saying some really weird words, that girl reaches her hand out to my arm. Why is it that she’s holding my arm now!?

“Here here, don’t be shy. Alright, we’re going down the sea, alright?”

“Eh? Ah, hold on.”

“Okay okay. Let’s go into the water~”

I’m brought to the seaside as I didn’t even have the chance to refuse. I look aside, and beside me, Yuuji nearby is in the water.

Anyway, let’s meet up. I think of heading to Yuuji.

But the girl pulling my hand suddenly stops.

I turn to look at her. So she can’t really swim?

“No, it’s nothing. Just go to the sea then~”

She sounds rather energetic, but why is she just standing there?? It feels weird.

“Hey, are you feeling alright? Or is it—”

That something’s bothering you? As I’m about to ask this question, I can see Yuuji and the other girl.

“Oh, what is it? The hair color faded…eh? It’s black?”

The tip of the hair entered the sea, and the color changed. That girl’s hair changed from the chestnut color to a pretty pitch black.

Eh? The hair color just changed. That means the color’s sprayed over or something? Why must she do that?

“…My hair color’s normally black.”

Suddenly, the girl’s tone changed. That’s—a clear voice from the valedictorian I often hear.

That’s right. Our valedictorian. In other words, she’s one of my friends—Kirishima Shouko-san.

Is that so? So that’s how it is. It’s no wonder why she’s so pretty. I wondered why Yuuji was so motivated. It can’t be helped if it’s Kirishima-san—

“Kirishima-san!? How is it possible!? Why is she here!?”

Was she following us when we met!? Were our acts seen through!? Is this girl pulling my hand an assassin!? But this girl doesn’t look like Himeji-san or Minami or nee-san or Kudou-san, and the voice isn’t like theirs. Did they ask someone else for help!?

As I look flustered, that person slowly says,

“…The speaker will enter the water if I go in further.”

That voice belongs to a very close friend of mine.

“……Eh?”

“…I’ll be troubled if the equipment’s spoiled.”

This tone, this voice; is this person—

“……Don’t tell me…Muttsu…rini…!?”

“…(Nods).”

The person, who nods and takes off the wig, is my classmate in disguise.

“The, then, the voice just now is?”

“Sorry Akihisa. It’s me.”

If I had noticed it properly, I can find that the voice came from the collar of Muttsurini’s parka. Ahh, is that so? So he doesn’t want the speaker to enter the water.

In that case, this guy’s pretending to have faulty equipment and even asked Hideyoshi to voice over, dressed himself up in a female outfit, and push Yuuji and me into a trap. There’s no benefit to Muttsurini himself for doing this.

“Muttsurini…why, must you do such a thing…?”

How is it that our friends would trap us like this without benefit? This guy may be a pervert, but he’s someone who’ll definitely not do such things.

On hearing my sullen question, Muttsurini lowers his head and answers,

“…If I refuse, I feel that I’ll be killed…!”

That moment of chilling feeling doesn’t look like it’s my imagination.

“Ha…haha, ha…is that, is that so…?”

So even the assistant Muttsurini feels that he’ll be killed…

I can’t help but look over at Yuuji. I can’t see Kirishima-san’s expression, but I can see it clearly from Yuuji’s stoned expression.

“…Yuuji.”

“……Yes.”

“…Seiza”[4]

“Eh? Seiza…it doesn’t seem appropriate at such a place.”

“…Seiza.”

“Well. This is the middle of the sea. I’ll end up drinking seawater if you make me sit in a seiza position here.”

“……How many times do you want me to repeat it?”

“…I’ll do it.”

Ploop. Even Yuuji’s head is dipped in water. Kirishima-san then gently presses her hand on his head.

I see. So our acts were revealed…

“Hey, Muttsurini.”

“…What is it?”

“Nee-san and the rest, they’re angry, aren’t they?”

“…One right hand, she said.”

“…Is that so…”

One right hand…ugh…looks like it will hurt…no, I don’t want to go back…

“…Anything can be broken *except for that one right hand*.”

“……(Splatter)”

“…Akihisa. This world isn’t so kind so as to forgive you even if you cry.”

Muttsurini doesn’t have any intention of letting me go as I struggle. Looks like this guy will be punished if he lets me get away. I can see from how he’s grabbing me with unnatural strength.

“Akihisa-kun, you should hurry back now, alright?”

“Ich freue mich darauf, Sie sehr zu treffen. Bereiten Sie sich bitte cor zu sterben, Aki?”[5]

“Aki-kun. Nee-san’s really sad…that she’s going to lose a little brother.”

“Hu, hurry up and run away, Yoshii-kun! These three really want to—”

Buzz. Kudou-san’s voice disappears from the speaker before she can finish.

“Hey, Muttsurini.”

“…What?”

“Didn’t you say you want the 2000 ero books?”

“…I value my life more than that.”

“Ahh, you really like to joke around. Aren’t you a man amongst man who will bet your life on ero?”

“…I’m wearing a girl’s outfit now.”

“No no, that’s just the appearance. Your true nature isn’t like that, Muttsurini.”

“……Akihisa. It was nice knowing you."

“WHAT’S WITH THAT FAREWELL LINE OF YOURS!? OF COURSE YOU’RE GLAD! TOMORROW, THE DAY AFTER, I’LL CONTINUE LIVING HAPPILY FROM TODAY ONWARDS! I’LL BE HAPPY IF I CAN LIVE!”

“…That’s, right……! ……I…feel, the same…!”

“DON’T CRY, MUTTSURINI! WHY MUST YOU SHED MANLY TEARS HERE!? YOU MIGHT AS WELL LET ME GO HERE IF YOU’RE WILLING TO CRY! DAMN, DAMN IT! WHAT’S WITH THIS MONSTROUS KILLER COAST!? I MIGHT AS WELL END UP BARRICADED WWAAAHHHHH!? THEY’RE HERE!? SOMEONE’S SWIMMING OVER REALLY FAST!!! ”

“…Farewell, Akihisa.”

The seabed was so dark, so silent—so cold.

Fumizuki Academy News -- [Columns]

Himeji Mizuki's 3-Minute Cooking Lesson!

❹After stirring to a good amount, add water, sugar, soy sauce, and salt. Let the mixture simmer.

❺When the sauce's color changes a bit, add 45cc of sulfuric acid.

When exposed to sulfuric acid and heat, the starch $(C_6H_{10}O_5)_n$ in the potatoes will hydrolyze into monosaccharides, which adds a lot to the sweetness!

❻After a bit of simmering, shut off the heat, and add the chloroacetic acid and potassium nitrate. Mix well, and turn on the heat again to simmer.

At this time, the metal part of the pot will begin to melt. If a hole opens at the bottom of the pot all the sauce will be lost, so it is important to finish preparation as quickly as possible!

❼Turn off the heat, contact a professional to process the remaining liquid in the pot, and it's done. Remember not to dirty the kitchen, as this is a rule that any chef must obey. With this meat and potato stew, that special person's tongue will definitely, definitely become addicted! (and sticky) You can't go wrong! (*Note: "Sticky" and "Addicted" are synonyms in Japanese.)

An Explanation From Fumizuki Academy News

The chemical reactions shown in this recipe:

① $NaCl + CH_2ClCOOH \rightarrow CH_2ClCOONa + HCl$
Salt — Chloroacetic acid — Sodium chloroacetate — Hydrochloric acid

② $KNO_3 + H_2SO_4 \rightarrow HNO_3 + KHSO_4$
Potassium nitrate — Sulfuric acid — Nitric acid — Potassium hydrogen sulfate

③ Hydrochloric Acid + Nitric Acid → Aqua Regia (King's Water) ☠

☠ 《Aqua Regia》 A more potent acid than hydrochloric acid and nitric acid, and is especially dangerous to humans. Besides "that special person's tongue", even his spine will melt.

Mizuki Himeji-san and the taste-testers around her have received special training. This is a dangerous method, and ordinary people should pay extreme attention to not attempt this.

Himeji Mizuki's 3-Minute Cooking Lesson!

文月新聞

Today's dish:
A Beef and Potato Stew That Will Melt Even "That Special Someone's" Mouth!

Ingredients (Serves 4):

Potatoes	4
Beef	200g
Onion	1
Soy Sauce	4 tbsp.
Sugar	3 tbsp.
Salt	1 tsp.
Sulfuric Acid	45cc
Small amounts of Potassium Nitrate	

Usually used as a preservative, so you can keep the food tasty!

If a vinegar-like taste is desired, add a small amount of chloroacetic acid. Its gamma variant melts at 53 C, and solidifies when cooled. Those who dislike that sour taste can take out the crystals after refrigeration. You may get better feelings from your significant other if you try harder to suit his tastes!

Columns

Cooking Directions

❶Peel onion and potatoes, cutting them into appropriately-sized pieces.

❷Pour some oil into a pot and saute the onions.

❸When the onions become translucent, add the cut beef and potatoes and saute.

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Cooking Directions

1. Peel onion and potatoes, cutting them into appropriately-sized pieces.
2. Pour some oil into a pot and saute the onions.
3. When the onions become translucent, add the cut beef and potatoes and saute.
4. After stirring to a good amount, add water, sugar, soy sauce, and salt. Let the mixture simmer.
5. When the sauce's color changes a bit, add 45cc of sulfuric acid.

   Side bubble: When exposed to sulfuric acid and heat, the starch $(C_6H_{10}O_5)_n$ in the potatoes will hydrolyze into monosaccharides, which adds a lot to the sweetness!

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If a hole opens at the bottom of the pot all the sauce will be lost, so it is important to finish preparation as quickly as possible!

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3. Hydrochloric Acid + Nitric Acid -> Aqua Regia (King's Water)

Aqua Regia -- A more potent acid than hydrochloric acid and nitric acid, and is especially dangerous to humans. Besides "that special person's tongue", even his spine will melt.

AKIRA YOSHII

DISCLAIMER: Mizuki Himeji-san and the taste-testers around her have received special training. This is a dangerous method, and ordinary people should pay extreme attention to not attempt this.

Me and the Seaside and the Festival Uproar (Second Half)

僕と海辺とお祭り騒ぎ（後編）

“Arre…? This, where is this…?”

I seem to see a very pretty flower field there…but it’s covered with fog, so I can’t really tell.

“That’s weird…I remember I was playing at the beach, right…?”

What I see in front of me is a wide river. That’s definitely not the sea.

Butterflies[6] are fluttering amidst the blooming flowers. I can vaguely smell sweet flowers and fruit. It’s like I’m in an imagination.

“It’s so pretty it looks otherworldly…”

I can’t help but mutter to myself.

Yeah. If I have to say it, this place looks like it links to that world or something —

“Wait, not good! Will I really die if I don’t go back!?”

Isn’t this the real Sanzu river in the first place!? Am I dying!?

“Over here! Hurry over here!”

“It’s nothing scary! This is a good place!”

“There’re all sorts of nice things to eat. All sorts of entertainment everywhere!”

Hiii! They’re calling me! Those unfamiliar people on the other side are waving at me and calling me to go over! Speaking of which, isn’t the one on the right most side my dead grandfather!? Not good! It’ll be bad if I listen to them!

I look closely, and see my great-grandmother and my relatives who died in a traffic accident. It’s a gathering of the dead people I’m familiar with! I have to hurry up and say goodbye to this place—

“Don’t be scared, Akihisa. This side is a nice place.”

'"NOT THERE, YUUJI! WHY ARE YOU WAVING AT ME!? CAN'T YOU JUST MIX AROUND WITH THE PEOPLE OVER THERE! YOU'LL REALLY BE UNABLE TO COME BACK!"'

"Hahaha, don't be scared, Akihisa. Can't you see that I'm very healthy here? There's no need to worry about coming here, right…"

"WAKE UP, YUUJI! FASTER! YOU'RE BECOMING AN EVIL SPIRIT! HALF OF YOUR BODY HAS BECOME A SPIRIT!"

"Ah really, I'm sorry here. But that's not the case, Akihisa. It's really good here. I'm happy here everyday—"

"Is, is that so? Is it really alright? You aren't lying, are you, Yuuji?"

"Yeah, of course it's fine. It's really fun, very fun, fun fun fun fun fun fun fun fun fun—!!"

"FAREWELL, YUUJI! I WON'T FORGET YOU!"

I turn around and dash away from the riverbank with all my strength. So that guy's a lose cause…! Farewell, my bad friend. I'll continue living for your sake at least…!

"I can't accept that you're the only one being saved…"

The curse rained on my back feels abnormally real and scary.

☆

“We’re actually still alive…”

“Ahh…I can’t really remember, but I think we really went to hell once…”

“To be honest, I’d thought that you guys lost it when you were sleeptalking…”

The four of us are in the pension living room, sitting on the sofa, glad that everything is over. It’s really a wonderful thing to still be alive. Looks like we didn’t have any amnesia; we definitely must thank God for giving us a strong body.

“But this is really unexpected.”

“Hm? What is it?”

“See, didn’t we do something really bad, Yuuji?”

“Yeah, that’s right.”

“…And you went off to hook up other girls even though you’re with girls. It’s very rude.”

Muttsurini tells us off. Yes, we’re reflecting on it…

“But don’t you find that the punishment is a little too light?”

“Yeah. It’s really soft of them to let go of us like that.”

“I’d feel that it can’t be considered light of you to be punished till a near-death experience…”

Unfortunately, the people around us seem to be different from the world, so I guess we shouldn't be bothered about it.

“That means.”

“Yeah. There’s still that move later.”

As expected…how depressing…

“What should we do? Shall we run?”

“No, we can’t run until we understand their intentions. If they forgive us, we’ll end up angering them even more.”

“In other words, we’ll end up alerting them?”

Yuuji’s right here. It’s a happy trip, so maybe everyone’s in a good mood and forgave us. If we think of it this way, it’ll be really stupid of us since we’re going to be pursued again if we run.

“And aren’t we going to a festival in a town nearby? They can’t possibly do anything outrageous even if they want to—I, believe…”

“Well, so we’ll be holding food for them or treating them to something…”

“…Isn’t that just like normal?”

Well, that sounds like it.

“Well, whatever.”

“Yeah. We’ll die if we run anyway. We’ll just lose out if we’re concerned here.”

“Yeah.”

“…How optimistic.”

This is the trick of not feeling pressurized in life.

“But they sure are slow. How long does it take to change anyway?”

Yuuji looks at his watch. It’s been past 30 minutes since the girls said they’re going to change. Even if it’s not like they’re going to beat us guys for changing in 5 minutes, they really spent quite some time changing. Is it really troublesome to change out of their swimsuits?

“““Kept you waiting!”””

The sweet voices ring, and the bedroom door’s opened at the same time.

“You people really spent some time—ohh!”

“Oh, amazing. So you’re preparing for such things.”

“…It’s understandable why you spent time.”

“I see. Yukatas. Everyone’s really suited for it.”

The girls (except Hideyoshi) walk out from the other side of the door, wearing yukatas of all sorts of colors. There’s blue, purple, pink and white. No, not just the colors, even the patterns are different. There’re Morning Glories, Peonies, even grapes. It’s just feels like we’re at a model exhibition of new yukatas as we see the line of people there. Of course, one of the reasons is that they’re all pretty and have nice figures.

“Heh~ pretty~ you girls look rather attractive after changing hairstyles.”

“Is, is that so?”

Himeji-san raises her sleeves and spin around a few times. Yes yes. That’s cute.

“I didn’t expect myself to wear these too.”

My sister is looking at her own yukata in a rather lost manner beside Himeji-san. Speaking of which, I don’t think I see a yukata in nee-san’s luggage…

“We secretly measured the sizes for everyone before this. Akira-san’s yukata was prepared by Shouko-chan.”

Kirishima-san and nee-san are around the same height, so I guess the height should be perfect.

“This is the first time I’m wearing a yukata.”

“Ah, that’s right. You came back from overseas, Minami.”

“It’s a little hard to walk in. It feels weird.”

Minami uses her hand to move the obi and skirt to try and make herself comfortable. And then, she reaches her hand in to loosen the back collar. The white slender neck that was covered in sunblock before enters my eyes.

Wha, what should I say…

"……Hoo……"

"? Wha, what is it, Aki?"

"Ah, ahh, no! it's nothing!"

I frantically look away from Minami's neck.

Why…? Why is it that I find Minami's especially attractive even though it suits everyone…?

(Yoshii-kun. Did your heart just flutter when you looked at Shimada-san?)

Kudou-san quietly moves towards me and whispers.

(Wha, what are you saying, Kudou-san! I'm not—)

(Fufufu. Shimada-san looks really cute in that yukata, right? You see, a yukata doesn't need to worn by people with large breasts just to look good, right? In that case, Shimada-san looks really cute when she has outstanding aspects everywhere else. Yukatas are saving graces for Shimada-san and me since we have smaller breasts.)

(Eve, even if you say so, I don't understand what you're saying at all.)

(Hmm…? Is that so? If you don't understand, I'll teach you. Watch this, okay?)

Kudou-san says as she puts her hand on the collar and turns to Muttsurini.

"Here."

"……!? (SPLLAATTTTEEEERRRRR)"

Muttsurini's face release fresh red flowers as he sees the skin revealed from the opened yukata. At that moment, my bad friend suddenly collapses to the brink of death.

"Mu, Muttsurini-kun!? What happened to you!?"

"…What, exactly, did I do to you…?"

I see Muttsurini saying this begrudgingly from far away as he collapses.

"See? Muttsurini-kun's more excited than usual, right? It's because I'm wearing a yukata even though I have small breasts, so I look more attractive."

"Hm…about this, I don't really understand how it's any different from usual, and I don't have a feeling…"

Is it psychology at work? I think I'm seeing Muttsurini spurting more nosebleed than usual.

"Are you still alive, Muttsurini!? Who did such a cruel thing to you!?"

"……I, probably won't be able to make it…"

"Pull yourself through, Muttsurini! You can't die yet!"

"……But, this might…be a good way to die…"

"…Well, I'd say that I'm a fool for worrying for you…"

Speaking of which, I think Muttsurini brought enough blood bags to last till tomorrow.

Anyway, I hand over the blood bags Muttsurini kept chilled to Hideyoshi. Behind me, Kirishima-san is saying something to Yuuji.

“…Yuuji, how’s my yukata?”

I can’t tell from her expression, but Kirishima-san seems to be moving towards Yuuji and showing off how she looks in the yukata. The black long hair and the bright purple yukata do match each other.

“Hm? Ahh, yeah~…it suits you, doesn’t it?”

Yuuji may be guilty over trying to talk up other girls as he praises Kirishima-san. What a dishonest guy. He deserves a thousand deaths.

“…Then, do you want to want to get married with me?”

“Not at all.”

“…Then, do you want to get married with me?”

“Chances of it are as big as a speck of dust.”

“…Then, Yuuji—”

“Not even a speck.”

“—Do you want to live…?”

“Ohh! You’re really so cute, Shouko! I’ve changed my impression of you!”

“…You’re really dishonest, Yuuji.”

“You…that was a ‘threat’ when I said it before you continued…”

“…Mother-in-law taught me that methods of earning love are unscrupulous.”

Kirishima-san’s really not giving off.

“Let’s go to the festival then. We might not be able to catch up if we often do such things?”

My sister claps her hands to prompt everyone. Is it this time already to say that we might not be able to make it? The sun just set; I think it’s still too early to close shops.

“That’s right, Akira-san. It’ll be bad if we can’t make it.”

“Let’s hurry. This is the second time I’m at a Japanese festival. I’m really looking forward to it~”

“…It’ll be bad if we’re late.”

“I’m really looking forward to it. let’s hurry off.”

“Let’s hurry”. The girls continue to repeat. Well, I just feel a little weird here.

“Yuuji, why are they so urgent?”

“Who knows? Maybe the food’s better than the sightseeing? I’m hungry too. It’s not like I don’t understand how they feel.”

“…Takoyaki, yakisoba, Sukiyaki.”

Now that they say that, I’m hungry too. I can think of the burnt chili sauce for some reason.

“Aki-kun, you all should get ready.”

“Yes—eh? Nee-san, we’re going there by car?”

My sister’s holding onto the car keys. I thought we’ll be walking there…

“Yes. It takes a longer distance to reach that place than the seaside, and it’ll be more convenient for us to have a change of clothes if we want to carry them.”

“Oh~”

It’s not easy to walk in yukatas? I think it’s more restraining to have a spare set of clothing just in case. It’s true that we have to be concerned since Minami’s not used to wearing yukatas.

“Then, after the seaside, let’s enjoy the festive spirit summer provides.”

“Yeah.”

“…We might get some good shots.”

“Sure feels like summer.”

We’re already elated just by imagining the festive songs we will hear.

We use the nearby school field as a carpark, and after a 5 minute walk, and see that the park where the summer festival is held is packed full of people.

“Eh…? That’s rare. It’s a doner kebab.”

Nee-san muses as she sees the nameplate of the stall.

“It’s rare? Not really. You never saw it before, didn’t you?”

“It’s been 5 years since I last saw it. this kind of thing can only be seen at stalls, right?”

“I don’t really know about that, but it’s common. It tastes good after all.”

“Really? I’ll try it then.”

Ah, not good. I might have said something I shouldn’t have said.

Nee-san’s chatting to me normally, but I don’t feel that what Yuuji and I did at the seaside has been forgiven. If nee-san says to me ‘Aki-kun, buy one for me’, I’ll have to shed tears and exchange the secret stash of money I worked so hard to save for this Doner kebab. How stupid I am, I said so much nonsense—

“Do you want to have some, Aki-kun? I’ll buy some for you.”

“Alright, I’ll go buy it…eh, ehhhhh!?”

“? What is it?”

“Ah, no, it’s nothing…”

How is it possible! It’s beyond what I expected! My sister didn’t ask me to buy,

but is treating me here! There’s definitely something fishy about it!

“Then I’ll share it with you , nee-san. I want to try other things too.”

“O, okay.”

Nee-san holds onto the purse full of money with one hand as she joins the queue. I don’t know if it’s because there weren’t a lot of people or not, but she quickly arrives back with the Doner kebab.

“This looks delicious. Do you want to try it, Aki-kun?”

“No, I’ll go last. You can have it first, nee-san.”

“Really? I’ll treat myself then—ah.”

Nee-san bites on the kebab that’s sizzling hot. My stomach starts to growl as I see nee-san enjoy the food.

“Here, have some too, Aki-kun.”

“Oh, thanks.”

I take the kebab nee-san hands over and takes a bite just like her.

The meat sauce and spices that came oozing out of the kebab mixes with the zesty chili sauce, and the combination stimulates my appetite. The taste of beef spreads in my mouth, filling my empty stomach.

“Un, it’s nice.”

The light and refreshing flavors of the bun, lettuce and onions match perfectly well with the oily and greasy taste. The combination of meat, vegetables, bun and the spicy flavor of the chili sauce is the strongest combination. It seems that all the strength I used to spend the hot day rises up in me. It really matches the mood of this festival. It’s really delicious.

“Ara ara, Aki-kun. Your mouth is that wide open…so you really want to eat it.”

Nee-san says this, and I find myself unable to wake up from the ecstasy. Ah… I ate more than half of it.

“Sorry nee-san. I accidentally ate too much. I’ll go buy another one.”

“No need. You can have it if you want, Aki-kun?”

My sister snickers as she says this. She’s really enjoying this.

“I won’t hold back then.”

“Here. Please do.”

I then finish off the rest. Ahh, it’s really delicious…

“Turn over here, Aki-kun.”

“Hm? What is it?”

I wolf down the last bite and swallow it, and hear nee-san calling me. What is it?

“You’re eating it too quickly. See? The sauce’s on your face.”

Nee-san says this and takes out the handkerchief from her pocket, and then reaches her hand to my face.

“Why are you rushing? There’s no one fighting against you for it.”

Nee-san uses the handkerchief to wipe the part covered in sauce. I can taste a sweet orange smell from the hankerchief.

“Tha, thanks, nee-san.”

“Don’t worry, it’s just a small thing.”

My sister smiles as she keeps the handkerchief. For some reason, it feels different from the usual atmosphere…did something happen…

I tilt my head in a puzzled manner as I crush the bag after eating. I then hear another voice from beside me.

“Akihisa-kun, I bought takoyaki here. Do you want to have some?”

Himeji-san shows a cute smile as she hands over a box of takoyaki with one

hand. This looks good too.

“Thank you. Can I have one?”

It doesn’t look like Himeji-san made it anyway, so I’ll gladly accept it. It’s really happiness for me to gain lots of nutrients today.

“Okay, then—”

Himeji-san uses the toothpick to pick up a piece of takoyaki.

“Ah—“

“Eh?”

I can’t help but let out a startled voice due to this unexpected action.

“? What is it, Akihisa-kun? You’re not eating it?”

“Eh, well. I am, but…”

Himeji-san smiles as she brings the takoyaki near my mouth. It’s a little embarrassing to play this ‘aahh…’ game here.

“Ah, ahh-n”

“Yes, here you go.”

I open my mouth, and Himeji-san’s hand brings the takoyaki to my mouth. The soft skin and the chewy octopus mix really well with the spiciness of the sauce. This thick fragrance is really irresistible.

“Un. It’s good, it’s good.”

“Really? That’s great.”

Himeji-san then uses the same toothpick to pick up another takoyaki and puts it in her mouth. Why do I feel that this act looks like what couples do—well, not good!

“So, sorry, nee-san! This isn’t an illicit relationship!”

I cover my head to defend. I nearly got careless because of the sudden kindness! So I can’t escape from this fatal crisis after all!?

As I’m having wild thoughts.

“? Why are you covering your head out of a sudden, Aki-kun?”

The expected vengeance from my sister didn’t come.

“Eh? Arre? What’s going on?”

“You’re really a weird kid, Aki-kun. See, you’ll block other people’s way by squatting at this place.”

“Akihisa-kun, you didn’t make your sister angry, so you can relax.”

Both of them chuckle as they look at me.

What’s going on? Is this the magic of summer? Is this what they mean about how summer vacation will make people mature?

“Aki, why are you squatting here? You have a headache?”

A teasing voice comes from right above my head.

I stand up to look and see Minami wearing a mask, holding a yoyo and a bag on her right hand and cotton candy on her left.

“No, it’s nothing. Don’t mind.”

It’s not that there’s a commotion caused by me squatting here, but I still stand up immediately. The stares of the people around me are really making me embarrassed.

“Did you get dizzy because of excitement? You’re really a kid, Aki.”

“No no. What about you, Minami? Aren’t you enjoying yourself too?”

“Eh? Re, really? I don’t really think so.”

“You’re holding so many things in your hands. Who’ll believe you when you say

that you aren’t enjoying yourself.”

“Thi, this is, you see…the big brother at the stall chose them for me, so I accidentally…”

Looking at her getup that looks like it can fit into a picture, I think she’s full of options, ready to try goldfish scooping and apple candy.

“You spent quite a long time living in Germany after all, Minami-san. It can’t be helped.”

“I’m happy that you’re happy too, Minami-chan.”

Nee-san and Himeji-san are giving happy looks to Minami.

“Aki, do you want some cotton candy? You can try some.”

“Cotton candy~? It’s been a while since I last ate it. I’ll try a little then.”

“Un. Okay, here you go.”

Like Himeji-san just now, Minami brings the cotton candy to my mouth. Wha, what’s this? Why’s everyone doing this to me? They’re rather kind here…?

“? You’re not eating?”

“Ah, I’ll have some then.”

I take a bite off the bamboo stick, and the sweetness of the candy that’s just like cotton as its name implies spreads in my mouth and melts. This taste is really memorable. I think I haven’t eaten it since primary school, have I not?

“There’s a shooting stall there. How do you play that?”

“Ahh, shooting. You shoot the prizes lined over there with a toy gun, and if you hit them, they belong to you. It’s that kind of game.”

“Heh~ looks interesting! I’ll have a look at it!”

“Wa, wait a second, Minami! Your yukata will go out of shape if you run off like that!”

“It’s fine! I’m already used to it!”

Minami seems to be in a good mood. Maybe this is the power of the festival at work.

“…Yuuji, do you want yakisoba?”

“Oh, ohh, I do.”

“…I even bought sukiyaki.”

“That, that’s really kind of you.”

“…Here, lemonade.”

“For some reason, it feels chilly to have such gentleness here..”

“…It’s nothing. This is very normal.”

This heavenly like time lasts for half an hour or so.

“Hm? There seems to be some even here.”

Yuuji sees a sign near the open-air stage of the park. Let’s see, what’s this…?

“‘Summer Night, Miss yukata contest! Let’s find the first summer beauty in town!’. Is this the grand event of the day?”

“A beauty pageant. Looks interesting.”

I often hear about it, but this is one of the shows I don’t get to see. I’m really lucky.

“This festival also bears the responsibility of developing the town, so it looks like they spent quite some effort on it.”

“Amazing. It looks like they rented out yukatas too.”

“…A chance for photos.”

“Heh~ I didn’t know there’s something like a pageant here~”

Everyone gathers as they surround Yuuji and me, looking at the panel. Does everyone have interest as well?

“…Looks interesting.”

Kirishima-san says as she grabs Yuuji by the sleeve. This is unexpected. However, I can’t really tell that Kirishima-san looks interested in any sense.

“Then, how about you sign up for it? I think everyone can definitely do well in it.”

There’re beauties around us, and they’re very suited for yukatas. Maybe they can win. No, they’ll definitely win if they appear.

First, the problem is whether everyone will appear.

I can only give a wry smile at my own thought.

“Ahh, it feels good too. How about everyone try this? We’ll definitely have wonderful memories of it.”

Himeji-san’s reply is really unexpected. She’s joining—this pageant?

“Ehhhh!? Are you serious, Himeji-san!? You don’t hate it!?”

“Yes. I’m a little embarrassed, but I can ignore that!”

Really, what exactly happened here…this reply is too unexpected…

“Really really? You’re okay with it? You have to go onto the stage, you know?”

I ask again. Maybe Himeji-san is talking about something else.

“Yes, it’s fine. I’ll work hard with everyone to make wonderful memories.”

Himeji-san is still smiling. Is that so? Making wonderful memories…it’s true that there won’t be a second year summer. It’s rare for everyone to be together

like this. it’ll be interesting if we can increase the number of memories we make.

“Then, let’s go register. Since everyone’s cute, you’ll definitely win.”

On hearing that, Himeji-san’s giving me a smile—a radiant smile that’s making my spine chilly for some reason, and tell us clearly.

“Yes, let’s all join in!..... **Everyone here**.”

““SCATTER!!!””

CRAK!

“Aki, where’re you running to?”

“…Yuuji *everyone here has to attend the pageant*.”

In an instant, Yuuji and I tried to escape, but Minami and Kirishima-san were standing beside us, and caught us. Their smiling faces aren’t changing, and the alarm within my body is ringing loudly.

“Wha, what are you saying…? I don’t understand at all…”

“Tha, that’s right. I don’t know the reason why we’re in an armlock at all.”

It’s summer, and my body is trembling for some reason. Even if it’s evening, it’s a little chilly for this season. Haha, haa…

“Akihisa-kun, Sakamoto-kun. Did you actually think—”

“…That your accosting in the day—”

“Can be forgiven just like that?”

Absolutely chilly voices and smiles.

At this moment, I finally realized.

Why we’re still alive and standing even after doing that.

Why they’re miraculously so gentle to us.

That’s right. Everything was—

“Everything was a trap for this…!”

“““A sin has to be repaid by punishment. Losers dogs have to be trained by whips”””

Not good. Himeji-san and the rest are gradually infected by the atmosphere in F class. Kirishima-san’s in A class, and the representative…

“But, but even so, it’s impossible to have us in female costumes, right?”

“Ye, yeah. We’re guys after all, you know?”

I was forced to wear a girl’s outfit during the school festival, but it was prepared beforehand. We can’t possible join the pageant in this getup anyway—

As I’m thinking about this, the girls fold their arms while looking like they’re laughing at Yuuji and me.

“Even your observation skills aren’t acute enough, Sakamoto-kun.”

“…Yuuji, you have to use your head.”

“Yeah. Leaving aside Aki, haven’t you noticed it, Sakamoto? When we’re on the car”

When we’re on the car…? What’s going on?

“Aki-kun, nee-san said before, didn’t I? ‘We’re driving over to prepare a change of clothes’.”

“““—!!!”””

We didn’t expect that! So the change of clothes isn’t made for Minami, but for us!?

“Wa, wait a sec! it’s fine for the skinny Akihisa, but my size doesn’t fit a female outfit! Just let Akihisa wear it alone no matter what!”

Yuuji puts his hands together and lowers his head to beg. Damn it…!

“Yuuji, you bastard! You’re only thinking of getting yourself saved, you traitor!?”

“Let go of me, Akihisa! I’m not like you! I’ve no interest in crossdressing at all ACK!”

“I don’t have a crossdressing fetish either!”

Such an uncouth man! You should be ashamed of yourself for only caring about yourself to run away!

“Putting me in this contest is going to drive people away here! I look like a guy no matter what.”

“…Yuuji and Yoshii, you don’t know how to give up.”

“Really, you should be mentally prepared like a man, Tsuchiya.”

“…!? (Fidgets)”

GAK!

“No you can’t, Tsuchiya-kun. How can you abandon your friends and run away? Right?”

“…It has…nothing to…do with me! (struggles)”

“I know about it, Muttsurini-kun. I know you took photos of us in swimsuits and got hooked up with those big sisters at the seaside, everything.”

“……!!! (Shakes head violently)”

“You don’t have to be ashamed of it or anything. you’re cute in the girl outfit just now. You’ll definitely do well♪”

“……!!.....I’m, just a victim…!”

Muttsurini continues to resist as Kudou-san grabs him. It can’t be helped. It’s basically impossible for us to take part in a pageant in the first place.

“And even if you want us to take part, it’s impossible for them to accept it in the first place!”

“Tha, that’s right! It’s just like what Akihisa said!”

Even if we want to take part, we won’t be able to pass through the registration phase. This isn’t even a crossdressing contest. This is a contest for girls.

“AH, then, let’s do this.”

I don’t know if Yuuji and my prayer requests were heard. Himeji-san claps her hands as she raises an earnest idea.

“Go prepare first. If you can’t pass the registration, we’ll just have to give up. But if you’re accepted, you boys will have to enter obediently, Akihisa-kun. How about it?”

I think quickly.

Using my common sense, we’re guys even if we crossdress. It’s impossible for those at the registration corner to not realize it. I have confidence in my own manliness, and there’s Yuuji around. No matter how much he’s dressed up, Yuuji’s a guy. If they realize that he’s crossdressing, they’ll start to suspect me. In that case, I’ll get what I want, and they’ll stop Yuuji, Muttsurini and me from appearing.

“Hm, is that…so?”

“It can’t be helped…since they say so, I’ll endure this shame for now…”

“……I’m an innocent bystander involved in this…”

As long as we endure this registration time and wait for the girls’ anger to subside, this would be a good strategy. I’ll endure it for now.

“Great. Then, let’s begin preparations. I’ll leave it to you, Kinoshita-kun.”

“I’d understand.”

The one being the make-up artist is my friend, Kinoshita Hideyoshi. Hideyoshi

will definitely understand our feelings and hold back. That’s great.

“I’ll leave it to you then, Hideyoshi.”

I’m surrounded in this atmosphere as I show a look to Hideyoshi.

“Un, leave it to me. I’d definitely let you appear in the pageant.”

Why such an answer? I’m screaming with my eyes here. Eh…? For some reason, it feels weird…? Hideyoshi will do up a disguise for us that’ll expose us, right?

“We, well, Hideyoshi…?”

“Sorry everyone. Makeup’s an important part of acting too.”

Hideyoshi says as he gives an angelic smile.

“—Sorry, but I’d won’t be able to hold back.”

“That’s too much…you’re really too much…why must you put in so much effort for this…”

“…What’s with “Tsuchiya Koumi”…”

“You’re still okay, Muttsurini…I’m called ‘Hong Shiew Li’ here…I have to crossdress AND dress up as a Chinese…”

“It’s true that you have the physique of a Chinese volleyballer, Yuuji…”

The three of us hug our knees together as we kneel. On a side note, I’m using the name “Yoshii Akiko” to register. Most likely, we’ll lose something precious or so.

“The three of you look rather suitable in yukatas♪”

“It’s true…hehe. Very, cute…”

“…Though Yuuji’s a little too short.”

“Aki-kun. Nee-san’s happy that you’re so pretty.”

“Let’s all have a photo together later, everyone.”

In contrast, the girls surrounding us are really happy.

And also, one of them would be grabbing our hands to prevent us from running away. Leaving aside Minami and Kirishima-san, why is Himeji-san able to use a grip strong enough to crush an apple here?

“The preliminaries will now begin! To all participants, please gather at the special stage!”

We hear the call from the person in charge from the side of the path. This is basically a death sentence.

“Looks like it’s starting. Let’s go, everyone.”

“Akihisa-kun, Sakamoto-kun. You shouldn’t be thinking of running away at this point, alright?”

It feels like we’re being brought away by the police. We can’t seem to run away here.

(Yuuji, Muttsurini, what should we do here…)

I can only exchange looks with them like usual. This skill is really convenient.

(I don’t know either…if we can’t run away, we’ll just have to lose…)

(So this is the only path left…)

(……I am so unwilling here…)

This tragic memory of summer doesn’t seem like it’ll let us grow into adults.

“Mu…? Speaking of which, why must I appear too…?”

Hideyoshi, who's engrossed in the makeup, finally asks the question.

☆

“And now, the new plan this year will finally begin! The first “Summer Miss Yukata Contest” will begin here!”

The excited and near-deafening voice echoes through the arena. It’s located in a very good location, near the clear seaside, and the place, when viewed from the stage, was filled with guests here to bath in the sea.

“This time, the activity is hosted with yukatas sponsored by “Obata’s yukatas’. As the theme implies, we’re looking for the best beauties in yukatas!”

At this point, I can only think that it’s great we’re not having a swimsuit contest.

“The rating system will be by points. The 3 judges will have their own decisions for the preliminaries, and the finals will be judged by the judges and everyone’s voting!”

Right now, it’s dinner time, and there shouldn’t be a lot of people in the preliminaries. If we enter the finals, we’ll attract a lot more attention, and we might end up on the news if we’re not careful. That’s why we have to lose here no matter what, to prevent ourselves from losing more things that are important to us.

“There are 59 participants in the preliminaries, and only 10 amongst them will be able to advance to the finals!”

There are actually 3 guys amongst the 59 people. This Miss(?) Yukata Contest show is in a situation where it should have its name changed, since the audience watching it probably won't expect this.

"Then, will the first 10 people please come on stage!"

I'm prompted by the personnel, and drag heavy steps to the stage.

Amongst these ten people, there are two people I'm familiar one. One of them is the mysterious Chinese 'Hong Shiew Li' Sakamoto Yuuji, and the girl who looks like a silent pervert 'Tsuchiya Koumi' or Muttsurini'. Just 3 of us amongst these ten are guys. It's really scary. If this town wants to carry out a revival, we'll be the culprits ruining this financial activity. Why is it that we look like corporate spies when we're just high school students?

"Then, let's start from entry number 1. Can we have your name, please?"

"Yes. Erm…I'm Higashino Satomi, on a holiday trip from Tokyo."

"So you're here on holiday trip from Tokyo. I really envy you there. Then, what's your specialty?"

"Ah, well, my specialty is—"

The host hands the mic to the first person, and the preliminaries are finally beginning.

Now, we'll have to take note of the important stuff.

I have to lose in the preliminaries no matter what. Absolutely.

However, there's another thing that's as important as this. That's to hide the fact that I'm crossdressing. I hope to be revealed when registering, but the rules now are different. Everyone's looking at me on the stage. If the fact that I'm crossdressing here gets revealed, it'll all be over if anyone related to the school is there. Besides this ridiculous getup in crossdress, I have to take part in the

pageant like this. I'll definitely become a problematic guy who believes that 'I'll be prettier than the girls if I crossdress here'. At that time, my social status will become trash.

Our mission is to 'hide the fact that we're crossdressing and fall out of the preliminaries splendidly.'

"Thank you. Then. We'll be presenting entry number 3. Please."

Not good. The mic's passed to me when I'm thinking here!

Anyway, I must not talk about something everyone will be interested in! I can't mention things that are directed at me. Also, I can't do things that are too cute or too manly. It'll be perfect if I take note of these! With my manly appearance, I can't possibly look cute even if I crossdress. It's definitely easy for me to fail in the preliminaries.

I hold the mic that's passed to me with both hands, and lower my head while not wanting to show others my face.

"Ye, yes. I, I'm, Yoshii Akiko…(fake voice)"

I try my best to restrain my voice. I'll show my normal voice if I speak too loudly here.

"What unique traits do you here?"

I'll just answer honestly here. Besides, I can't think of a lie out of a sudden.

"The, then, as for specialty, it'll be cooking…like paella, spaghetti or so."

Speaking of which, what's with this humiliation…my face feels like it's burning…

"Cooking, is it? So you're amazing in housework~ Then, do you do so in house too?"

In house? Well, I do cook at all. I do all the housework anyway.

“Yes, basically everyday…”

Yeah. I can’t lie here.

“So you do housework everyday! It’s rare to see young girls do so nowadays. Your score will be very high here! Then, I’ll go even further—do you have a boyfriend?”

Won’t it be scary if I do!?

“No, not at all! Not even once…”

I can’t help but raise my voice, and I hurriedly quiet myself down. Phew, that was close. Got to control myself a little here.

“Ohh! This is really a blessing to all men! How about it, our sponsor and judge Obata-san?”

“If you tell this oji-san your phone number, I’ll send you pocket money later.”

“Alright. Even though you’ll likely be dead if you’re not the sponsor, that’s not allowed, so we’ll change the question. Yoshii Akiko-san. What’s the most concerned thing you have regarding this Miss Yukata contest?”

Why, why are there so many questions!?

Anyway, I better say the truth if I don’t want to reveal myself…

“Well…I don’t really have anything that’ll show my bodyline…”

Hideyoshi probably checked on it. I won’t be showing any male bones here.

“Based on what we can see from the blushing face, it seems that Yoshii Akiko-san’s rather shy. Our yukata sponsor Obata-san, do you have any further

questions to Yoshii-san?”

“Please tell me if you’re wearing any underwear.”

“Thank you for raising an idiotic question that will excite anyone after one whole round of dily-dalying. I don’t know if it’s my intention, but I can’t stop breaking out cold sweat here.”

Un, underwear!? As in—female underwear!? What sort of joke is that! Even if it’s me, it’s impossible for me to fall to the extent that I’m wearing female underwear! I have to dispel this misunderstanding no matter what!!

At this point, I have to say it loud and clear—

“I, I’m not wearing underwear!”

I only have interests in wearing trunks!

“““UOOOOHHHH!!!”””

“Yo, Yoshii-san!? It’s fine for you not to answer such degrading questions! To every male guest, please don’t hoot here! This isn’t the kind of place!”

“It’s decided! She can’t enter the finals. It’s a waste of talent for her to show off in front of the fools.”

“You’ve heard wrongly! How can a sponsor call the guests a bunch of idiots!? Anyway, Yoshii Akiko-san, thank you for cooperation. Also, I’m sorry for that…”

A personnel takes away my mic and hands it to someone else.

I don’t understand, but since it’s said that I won’t be able to advance, it looks like my plan succeeded. There’re weird stares looking at me, but it can’t be helped as this is a pageant.

“Excuse us for just now. Then, let’s focus on contestant entry number 4.”

“Hello everyone. I’m Imura Midori. I’m here on a trip from Fukuoka.”

Finally, it's over for me. I'll just have to watch and wait for entry number 5 Muttsurini and number 7 Yuuji. Those guys are really stupid compared to me when I'm able to adapt on the fly. I'm looking forward—besides being worried—to things a little here.

"Is that so? So you like surfing, Imura-san. The sporty type isn't bad either, right, Obata-san?"

"I have no interests in surfing."

"The tan lines match the yukata really well, right, Obata-san?"

"Nope. If we're talking about yukatas, snowy white skin will be required."

"Either way, this is the feeling of summer, right? Obata-san?"

"What obvious things are you talking about? Do you think that it's autumn or winter here?"

"Don't worry! I may be like this, but I'm a professional host after all! I definitely won't beat up the sponsor here!"

Is it my imagination? For some reason, it feels like there's a killing intent surrounding the judging table.

"Thank you, Imura-san. Next will be entry number 5, Tsuchiya-san. Please introduce yourself."

"……I'm Tsuchiya Koumi."

Muttsurini hides his face inside his bangs and says his name with a soft hoarse voice. His attitude of trying to sneak past this is clearly reaching me. As expected, he's thinking of the same thing as me.

"This slightly hoarse voice is really tickling me. You came here to swim with

your friends, I suppose?”

“…Yes.”

“Your yukata’s well worn. Did you put it on yourself?”

“…No, a friend helped me put it on.”

“Is your friend here?”

“…Yes.”

Muttsurini lets the conversation continue while answering simply ‘yes’ or ‘no’. That kind of attitude definitely won’t raise interest. He’ll definitely be eliminated.

“—Then, what kind of clothing do you like other than yukatas?”

“…Cheongsams and kimono are self-explanatory and also Race Queen and Cheerleader and Cabin Attendant uniform and family restaurant waitress and female officer uniform and leotards and office ladies suits and sailor uniform and miko and maid outfits and tennis skirts and all of these seem rather good, not really?”

I guess that ‘not really’ is just as late as a heart massage on a person that’s cremated.

“This, is really shocking…Tsuchiya-san has a cold attitude and pitiful appearance, but it seems like her interest is in cosplay. It’s a complete buzzkill of moe to a certain group of people!”

“……Please forget about it…! (Shakes head)”

Ahh. He does look a little cute as he lowers his head and shakes it. Just like a little animal.

“““Koumi! Koumi!”””

“…Tr, troubled…! (Flustered)”

The calls for Koumi can be heard from all over the arena, and the anxious Muttsurini’s starts to panic. Well…it’s a pity, but I have to say that it’s decided. I didn’t expect Muttsurini to have the talent of capturing other people’s hearts.

“Such a shocking reassurance! Tsuchiya-san’s advancement into the next room is all but decided! Thank you very much, Tsuchiya-san!”

“…I, I’ll…I’ll really be bothered…!”

Even if he wants to salvage the situation, the mic’s handed to the next person. It’s impossible to prevent Muttsurini from advancing to the next round. Farewell, my bad friend…

“…Why…am I always the one getting hurt…”

From the corner of my eye, I see Muttsurini’s shoulders dropping out of a sudden. It’s divine retribution for him since he often sells photos of others crossdressing. If I have to say it, serves him right.

Then, Muttsurini’s part is over, and last of all, it’s Yuuji…what kind of expression will he show on his turn.

I wonder as I look over at Yuuji, and see that he has a relaxed smile.

(Fufu. You idiots. That amount of manliness isn’t enough!)

We exchange glances to talk like usual. Mu…why is it that his relaxed expression really annoys me?

(You better take this chance to say so, Yuuji. You’ll definitely panic when it’s your turn.)

I answer him with a stare. It’s too naïve to think that he’ll be the only one passing easily! There’ll definitely be some mishaps happening!

(What nonsense are you saying? Look at my physique. I’m tall, and my frame is

wide. These are all negatives no matter how you look at things. It’s expected that I’ll drop out in the preliminaries.)

Yuuji puffs his chest in a proud manner. It’s true that for that guy, that physique doesn’t match someone taking part in a pageant. Ku…! Too cheap…! Only one person manages to escape easily…!

“Alright, thank you everyone. Then, it’s now time for contestant entry number 7. This is a contestant from faraway China, Hong-san, please!”

(I’ll show you the manliness I can’t hold back here!)

Yuuji’s eyes are saying as such as he receives the mic. Damn it…! That physique’s too much. That guy should suffer more!

“Hong Shiew Li. Nice to meet everyone.”[7]

Yuuji’s a Chinese now, so he’s deliberately talking in rough Japanese. If there’s a question he doesn’t know how to answer, he’ll just pretend to not understand. That’s a cheap designation he’s using here. How despicable…!

“This one…is a little tall here. How is it, Obata-san.”

It seems that it’s tough for the host to handle Yuuji too, and he’s asking the judge here. In that case, Yuuji’s rating won’t be high no matter what. He seems to understand too as he gives a carefree smile.

At this point, the judge who has the right to determine who goes into the finals announces,

“That’s great. I personally like tall girls most!”

Ohhh! Yuuji looks like he’s really shocked here—!!

“Ohh! She got a high score from the judge! Obata-san, do you have any questions you like to ask Hong-san?”

“How about a honey to Cambodia!?”

“Sorry, I can’t comment on this! I have lots of things to say here but a professional has to endure everything the partner says no matter what!”

The judge’s passion is rising abnormally. He tries his best not to jump on stage as he stares at Yuuji. It seems that the voice that came from the stage, “…Get rid of that judge.” is my imagination.

Yuuji’s silent due to this overwhelming shock, and finally manages to recover and answer.

“It, it can’t work since we’re of different Nationalities.”

“It’s fine, anything can be overcome with love. My honey!”

“There’s no love.”

“I have confidence that I can light the love within you.”

“I hate you.”

“We can start from friends. I’ll treasure you forever.”

“Behave yourself, or I’ll really kill you, uncle.”

“Kill me however you want if it’s you!”

Damn it! Yuuji’s acting disguise is really wearing off here!

第1回納涼ミス

“Then, it seems that Obata-san really likes Hong Shiew Li-san. We’ll then continue—”

“Wait, I’m not done yet! Shiew Li! When can I visit your parents!?”

“I didn’t hit anyone! I just saw a mosquito flying by! Then, it’s about time for the next contestant.”

“…It can’t be helped.”

“Everyone, please look over here…it’s the final entry number 8. Let’s invite Watarai-san!”

“Watarai Miki. Please take care of me.”

“Watarai-san’s a local too. Obata-san, do you have any questions as a local?”

“No interests.”

“Don’t just say that. Just ask anything, anything like how motivated you were on Hong-san.”

“It can’t be helped…oh yes, number 8-san, please tell me the impression you have on Hong-san.”

“Just go to the backstage and ask Hong-san! Never come back!”

“WHAT’S YOUR ATTITUDE TO THIS SPONSOR HERE!”

“STOP PRETENDING TO BE A NORMAL PERSON HERE! FINE! I’LL QUIT THIS RIDICULOUS HOSTING JOB!!”

“DO, DON’T YOU DARE HIT THE FACE! I HAVE TO SEE SHIEW LI’S PARENTS”

“I’LL JUST HAVE TO BEAT YOU UP UNTIL YOUR SWINE-LIKE FACE MIGHT BECOME NICER!”

“…Yuuji, I definitely won’t allow you.”

In the end, the violence that started from the judges ends up continuing until everyone who's involved in it were either hospitalized or detained.

I guess this pageant contest will never happen a second time.

"In the end, we're the only ones shaming ourselves…"

"…My heart's broken…"

"In all sorts of sense, this will become a summer we'll never ever forget…"

We left the festival area and returned back to the pension and use the portable stove in the yard to prepare the barbeque as we await dusk.

I can't get married anymore…

"After I calm down and think about it, we'll have to go onto the stage later anyway."

"Tha, that's right…we're so mad just now that we didn't notice, but it was really dangerous now that we think about it…"

"…Good thing we stopped midway through."

"Me too. I'm not used to this kind of entertainment. We're saved."

"I find it really interesting~"

The girls, who're at the table that's slightly far away, are preparing the utensils and drinks as they put their hands on their chests in relief. In the end, they were waiting in the rest room after registering…how sneaky…

"But I'm really concerned about the results of the competition. Who'll win if this

kept up?”

Right now, everyone has changed into ordinary clothes, but how they looked in yukatas…were of some standard. It’s not weird if someone amongst them wins.

“Yeah…well, I guess Hideyoshi would be the most appropriate choice, right?”

“Yuuji, do you feel that the term ‘appropriate’ should be used here when I’m a guy?”

“…It’s hard to decide between everyone.”

“Yeah. Everyone’s cute.”

The three guys have their own opinions of the girls’ in yukatas. The girls are right beside us. Isn’t this a little rude?

Thinking about this, I secretly glance aside at the table, and see that they’re having their opinions on the boys too. Well, I guess we’re even here.

“As expected, I think it should be Akihisa-kun. That cute dress-up and that natural airheadedness is really irresistible.”

“Tsuchiya’s cute too, but I’ll still go with Aki~”

“…Yuuji’s obviously lacking…as expected, he’s more suited for manly get up.”

“I’m rather touched by Muttsurini-kun’s crossdressing. I didn’t expect it to fit him well~ what about you, Akira-san?”

“I’m already used to seeing Aki-kun crossdressing…but the other two are a pleasant surprise too.”

“Eh? Used to seeing Akihisa-kun crossdressing, as in—”

“Mother here likes girls especially. With me as the older sister, we often make Aki-kun wear the skirts I used to wear. The original name for him was supposed to be ‘Akina’, but our grandfather said that it’s weird to have this name for a boy, so it became like this—”

I think my shameful past was revealed here!?

“Wa, wait a second! Don’t say it, nee-san! It’s all a mistake here!? Even if I used to be dressed up like that, it’s before I went to kindergarten!”

I hurry to the table and reach my hands out, intending to shut my sister’s mouth.

“Aki-kun. You can’t lie. I gave you a skirt to wear on that night two days ago, remember? When you’re sleeping.”

Nee-san giggles as she avoids my hands and continues. Speaking of which, I think I just heard something more dangerous than a simple revealing of secret here!?

“This is the first time I’m hearing such a thing!? What were you doing when I was sleeping!?”

“Fufu, there’s no need to worry, Aki-kun. Half of it was a lie.”

“HALF!? WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY HALF!? WHAT IN THE WORLD DID YOU DO TO MAKE IT A HALF-LIE!?”

“I just put the skirt onto your knees.”

“THIS IS JUST PUTTING IT ON HALFWAY!?”

“In professional terms, it seems like it’s called ‘half naked’.”

Th, this is bad…I must remember to lock properly in the future…!

“This is really bad, nee-san! I’ll be angry if you enter my room on your own like that!”

“Why are you so angry? I’m troubled here.”

“I’M THE ONE BEING TROUBLED HERE!!”

Did you take a photo of it or something!?

“Alright alright, Aki-kun. I’ll give you a hug to cool you down.”

“GET AWAY FROM ME! HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO CALM DOWN LIKE THAT…!”

“Aren’t you completely calmed down now?”

“HAH!? NO, THAT’S NOT IT! THAT’S, because I’m always brought up by nee-san like this, it’s not that I’m really calmed down uu…”

“Okay okay, you’re really a good kid, Aki-kun.”

Guuu…! I calmed down without noticing…!

“Oi, it’s about done here.”

Yuuji, who’s watching over the barbeque, calls over here. After a while, the charred smell of the meat juices whiffs over with the wind. There’s also the burnt fragrance of the sauce—is that guy making grilled onigiri and corn? It’s really brilliant. The worms inside my stomach are grumbling.

Speaking of which, we worked hard for an entire day, but we only had fried noodles during noon and the snacks from the stalls at the festival before 6. Leaving aside the girls, it’s impossible for me, a high school boy to be satisfied just like that. Well, I was able to maintain my life by living on much worse food before my life-saving accounts come in.

“It’s time. Okay, it’s very late now, but let’s have dinner.”

I escape from nee-san’s arms as she cuddles me and head to the stove where Yuuji’s preparing the drinks and cups. Even so…why is it that this guy looking so cool with a towel tied on his head and a pair of tongs in his hand? It’s like he’s giving off the ‘seaside feeling of summer’. I’m really envious here.

“Oh, Akihisa. It’s nicely grilled here. You can have as much as you want.”

“Un, thanks. Here’s your drink, Yuuji.”

Yuuji served me a paper plate full of burnt lard, so I respond by giving him a paper cup filed with salad oil.

“““……!””

“Alright you two, you won’t be able to eat if you keep glaring at each other. It’s going to be burnt.”

“…It’s nice.”

Hideyoshi and Muttsurini have served the grilled pieces of meat onto the plate. Now’s not the time to fight against this scumbag Yuuji. I have to hurry up and eat!

“I’m tucking in~!”

The wire mesh has meat, onigiri, whelks and King Trumpet Mushrooms. Each one of them looks really nice. It’s really hard for me to choose.

“Heh~ they all look good. You’re rather amazing at this, Sakamoto.”

“…The husband I’m so proud of.”

“Stop spouting nonsense and start eating. The food will be snatched away if you space out like that.”

“…Yes.”

Yuuji continues to cook, add charcoal, fan and deal with several jobs while not forgetting to put some food into his mouth.

“Thank you for preparing food, Sakamoto-kun. I want to help too, if only Aki-kun didn’t stop me.”

“I wanted to help too, but I don’t really know outside cooking well…”

My sister and Himeji-san apologize to Yuuji. These two people were the ones who wanted to cook right from the beginning, but I manage to stop them with all I got.

“Ah, it’s fine. Don’t mind, I really like doing this.”

Yuuji can only give a wry smile as he can’t give the real reason. But actually, Yuuji really likes doing such outside stuff, so these may be his true thoughts.

“Really, it’s bothersome that you worry so much, Aki-kun. Do you not trust your sister’s cutting skills?”

“Akira-san, Akihisa-kun wouldn’t let me help cook before. I didn’t get cut by the kitchen knife or anything.”

No. it’s not about whether you’ll be hurt by using the kitchen knife or not. The problem is that you can kill without the kitchen knife, Himeji-san.

“Then, how about all the girls have a cooking duel next time? It’s not good to have the boys do so all the time.”

“Ah, this idea’s good too, right, Minami-chan?”

Without looking, I can tell that the guys are giving the ‘don’t do anything unnecessary looks…’

“Seems interesting. Let me join in if I have time from work.”

“…Count me in.”

“Do I have to join in too~”

The excited girls aren’t realizing the ugly expressions the guys are giving off right now.

“But how do we decide on the winner in this cooking contest? Everyone have their own preferences…”

“Ah, that’s true. How should we decide on the winner?”

Most likely, it’s either a K.O. or a T.K.O.

“I, I say, you guys, how about you eat instead of worrying about such things? It’s almost burnt!”

“Yuuji’s right! See, the corn here is barbecued nicely!”

“…The scallops here are really good too.”

“I’ll go get drinks! Which do you want? Cola? Orange juice or Oolong tea?”

Himeji-san alone is enough to deal critical damage. If we include nee-san, I won't be able to stand properly just by imagining the consequences. The four of us start our resistance to avoid turning this into reality.

This and that happens for an hour.

"Um. It's good."

The food we brought over's cleared up nicely.

"Hm~…feels like we haven't had enough yet."

Yuuji looks reluctantly at the top of the wire mesh. Actually, I too feel that it's not enough.

"That's a failure…did we make a mistake in counting the ingredients?"

We did intend to prepare 9 people's worth of food, but everyone's appetite is better than we expected. Maybe it's because we're eating outside and because of the day activities.

"…We don't even have rice and vegetables here."

There's only juice and ice inside the cooler box. But these things aren't going to fill our stomachs.

"How about we look around, Akihisa?"

"Heh? Scout around as it?"

"There's a lot of things here, right? There's the sea."

There is, and then…

"Are we going to get ingredients?"

"It's the seaside. There has to be some clams or something here. We have a fire here, so it'll be delicious if we can grill them.

Clams? It should be good if we clear the sand and wash it with salt water. But,

“Won’t it be troublesome for us to go collect the ingredients at this time?”

“Well, that should be the case…we’ll decide with a game. The loser will have to do it, how about it?”

“Looks like you guys really love to play games like this.”

“…I love punishment games.”

Hideyoshi and Muttsurini can only grimace at Yuuji’s suggestion. Even so, I don’t think even Yuuji will do so seriously. It should be a joke or something—

A CHILL

“—!!!”

At this moment, my body’s trembling so much out of a sudden.

It’s a strong and sharp feeling, like there’s an ice pillar stabbed into my back. It’s different from a killing intent, a pure presence of death that’s simply and purely closing in on us. How, how is it possible…! What’s with this sudden uneasiness in such a peaceful eating place? How can there be…!?

I start to shudder in fear. Why is this happening? I’m rather concerned about Himeji-san’s lips as she talks to Minami from the corner of my eye. What is she saying? Why am I so concerned?

“Speaking of which, I—“

Speaking of which?

“Made some chiffon cakes at home—”

Now I know the answer.

“LET’S GO YUUJI! LET’S GO GET SOME CLAMS AT THE SEASIDE! EVEN IF IT’S A SECOND EARLIER!”

“WELL SAID, AKIHISA! LET’S GO GET LOTS AND LOTS OF CLAMS! *WE HAVE TO GET SO MANY THAT WE CAN’T EAT ANYTHING ELSE*!”

“THE NIGHT SEA SURE HAS QUITE THE SCENERY, I’D THINK. RIGHT, MUTTSURINI!?”

“…We can definitely find lots of clams in dark areas…!”

We continue to rush to the seas. We relaxed after thinking that there’s nothing else that’s dangerous on the vehicle, but I didn’t think that she prepared some food for the return journey…! It’s really heart-wrenching that on our way back, when everyone’s thoroughly tired, that Himeji-san will work so hard to provide dessert for everyone…!

“? Why are those guys so frantic? What’s going on?”

“Who knows…?”

“Well, never mind…then, how’s the chiffon cakes, Mizuki?”

“Ah, yes. I made chiffon cakes, but I wrapped it up and left it on the table at home.”

“Heh~ that’s really a pity. You worked so hard to make it.”

“Yes.”

I thought I heard something behind, but now’s not the time to care about that. Anyway, I just have to collect more clams than the rest. If I collect one less than the others, it’ll mean instant death. This hunt isn’t about eating, but about not eating…!

“““Who’s…willing to die here—!”””

I run and take off my shirt and trousers, wearing only my trunks as I jump into the water. The summer sea feels warm even at night, and that helps me a lot.

“Alright! The first—”

“Don’t you dare, Yuuji!”

“OWAH!? AKIHISA YOU PUNK! IT’S TOO DESPICABLE FOR YOU TO SEND A FLYING KICK HERE!”

“DID YOUR CLAM DROP HERE, YUUJI!?”

“…I’ll take it then…!”

We continue the hunt as we bet on our lives.

We continue to search for clams and get in each other’s way. It’s about midnight the moment we drag our weary bodies back.

The next day, on the ride back.

“Really, these guys are sleeping like kids…”

“Fufufu. Sure looks that way. They look cute even though they’re of our age for some reasons.”

“…Boys will always be kids.”

“Ahaha. They really look like innocent sleeping kids there.”

“They’re tired because they went overboard with their fun. Being happy is more important than anything else here.”

“Yeah. I’m very happy!”

“Me too!”

“…Same here.”

“Me too.”

“Fufu. I’m happy to hear you say that too.”

“But everyone really fell asleep so quickly.”

“They were groggy before they got on the car.”

“Yeah. They gobbled up everything during breakfast and fell asleep immediately.”

“That’s true. They even ate up our share too! Really!”

“That’s really a pity, Mizuki-san.”

“Yes. That’s true, Akira-san. Everyone immediately fell asleep—”

““—We didn’t hear them say what they feel about the breakfast we made this morning.””

KOUMI TSUCHIYA

At this moment, the four of us are reunited at the riverside with flowers blooming…but that’s another matter altogether.

Fumizuki News (School Politics/District Finances)

The class representatives of the best —and worst classes have announced their engagement.

~To remove all regrets in the summoning wall~

私達、結婚します。
Thank you for
Celebrating
with us!

The wedding photo between Fumitzuki Gakuen's class 2-A's Kirishima Shouko-san (16) and class 2-F Sakamoto Yuuji-shi (16) taken at the recently opened Kisaragi Highlands was revealed. These two class representatives were trying to kill each other because of the intense summoning war that happened right at the start of the year, and knew that there is animosity and regrets between these two classes, but their wedding might become a bridge to ease the regrets and grudges between these two classes. There was also the case of the higher-ranked D class starting a summoning war against F class, so this mutual understanding between A class and F class will probably ensure that the students live a peaceful life. On a side note, this is the first time in Fumitzuki Gakuen's history that the class representatives of the top and bottom classes are getting married.

The unexpected 'reward of happiness' that came with the commercialization

Kisaragi Highlands, which released this photo, explains that once both of them are at the age to marry, they will have their wedding ceremony in the 'Kisaragi Highlands hotel, Phoenix Room' (also commonly known as the Miso-stewed mackerel). The spokesperson of the organization was smiling as the announcement was made, saying, "Our guests came to our theme park and decided to make an eternal vow. This is really a happy thing to us, and we'll give them our full blessings." However, when we asked him about "There are rumors that Sakamoto Yuuji-shi did not agree to this." The spokesperson replies jokingly, "That's definitely just a baseless rumor. If you want to ask more about these baseless things, I'll spray your houses with milk and send you wiping cloths a week later." and avoids this topic. It seems that Kisaragi Highlands is using this understanding as a 'passive promotion' for their newly opened theme park. Kisaragi Highlands celebrated their wedding, and even prepared a full wedding for them. The preparation for this wedding would require lots of expenses, and economically, students themselves will find it hard to bear the costs, but this is just a minor thing to a large enterprise. Also, Kisaragi Highlands has received quite a few other wedding requests, and to them, this is an unexpected 'lasting bond effect' they have to be wrongly happy about. Based on this, Kisaragi Highlands decided not to just follow this path, but also promoted the 'rest area to promote boy-girl relationships'. This act drove up the finances in that area, and even the households nearby have actively contributed. In this situation where the economy's bad, the marriage between Sakamoto Yuuji-shi and Kirishima Shouko-san can be said to be a 'reward of happiness'.

Calls for those involved to reveal what happened during the dealing of the aftermath

Also, there is gossip amongst the second years of Fumitzuki Gakuen that there is a secret meaning behind this wedding. Kirishima Shouko-san is the valedictorian in the year, has pretty looks, exceptional athleticism and a staggering family background. In contrast, Sakamoto Yuuji-shi is an ugly ogre who has failing grades and has a bad attitude to studying. It seems that there were rumors happening after something major happened between both of them. Rumors of how ‘Kirishima-san only has interest in girls and not boys’ in the first year only affirms these rumors. According to rumors, Sakamoto Yuuji-shi once said that ‘he raised a condition to the other side, and if that happens, he would close an eye and not request for an exchange of facilities’. There was an interpretation too that perhaps A class’ representative would have to offer herself after the summoning war if she lost to save their classroom facilities.

Fumizuki News XXXX Year XX Month XX Day

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Regarding this incident, the summoning war committee of Fumitzuki Gakuen sternly explained, "If things were as dangerous as how it seems, we'll be so envious that we want to kill him in envy." However, they admitted that there has been no confirmation in recently, and will carry out investigations on this and might reveal the truth. As for how their classmate got suspected, the attitude of the F class' FFF Inquisition is that 'the truth doesn't matter. What matters is how we're supposed to execute him' and does not look like they care about the revealed truth. It looks like it will take some time before the truth is revealed. Our newspaper club here went off the interview the classmates of Sakamoto Yuuji-shi and Kirishima Shouko-san in primary school, and heard that they have been maintaining their relationship since primary school, so the relationship between them can be considered to be childhood friends. Perhaps what caused Sakamoto-shi, who was hailed as a 'prodigy' in the past, to become a person like this was due to happened when he was in primary school.

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Sugawa Ryo's special lecture.

"How to protect the first kiss ~My legend of protecting it for 16 years~"

Due to several reasons, this lecture will be delayed indefinitely.

The planned release in the previous issue

"I'm not dumped. If I don't admit it, it means that I'm not dumped"

Was also removed from the issue. Our newspaper club apologizes for this wholeheartedly.
We have no confirmation of what will be in the future special column.

The class representatives of the best — and worst classes have announced their engagement.
~To remove all regrets in the summoning wall~

文月新聞

School Politics

District Finances

The memorabilia photo taken at Kisaragi Highlands between these two affectionate people, Kirishima Shouko-san (left) and Sakamoto Yuuji-shi (right)

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YUUJI SAKAMOTO

Yuuji and Shouko and All the Childhood Memories

雄二と翔子と幼い思い出

“...Okaa-sama.”

“Ah, good morning, Shouko-chan.”

“...Good morning.”

“Shouko-chan's so pretty, it'll be a waste to be a couple with our Yuuji.”

“...That's not true, I'm not pretty...and Yuuji's the coolest person in the world.”

“Oh my, Shouko-chan, you really haven't changed up till now.”

“...Nn, because—”

“Because of what?”

“...Because I've always liked Yuuji ever since that time.”

A prodigy appeared in the 5th year of Minazuki primary school.

Of course, it wasn't really enough to be country-wide news, but to the people around, it's enough for them to talk about him.

For example, if they put an elite high school entrance paper for him, he can easily write out all the correct answers.

For example, he can read the rules of Shogi and Go, understand them for a little while, and still match the top player in school.

For example, his IQ was 200.

There were all sorts of rumors on the streets. They weren't all facts, but they weren't baseless. In fact, in a mock test against freshmen in middle school, he came out top even though he was only a fifth-grader. On hearing this news, the teachers at Minazuki primary school immediately alerted the neighboring schools, and this student became even more famous, and even highly recommended.

Perhaps since he had such a sharp mind, that boy used to view himself a little too highly, but he never created much problems. He was even a student who had a

thirst of knowledge, and a high academic achiever.

--However.

“You're saying that our Yuuji...used violence?”

On hearing the form teacher of her son say that, Sakamoto Yukino immediately started to doubt her ears. Though her child was somewhat cold, he wasn't someone who would use violence. Even though he had some friction with the people around him, he wouldn't be too bothered about it. It's alright if it was just a quarrel, but a fight...Yukino can't imagine her son doing that.

“Yes, Sakamoto-kun's an outstanding student, so I can't believe that he would do that...but after I continued to ask, he himself insisted 'I beat them up because I don't like those guys'.”

It seems that the homeroom teacher had the same thoughts as Yukino, as one can hear the disbelief in her voice. One can even tell that she's even more confused than Yukino.

“I see. So Yuuji did such a thing...”

“I let him go back home first, so after your son reaches home, please ask him what happened. If this keeps up, perhaps his application to enter Shimotsuki High—Middle School will be affected...”

“I understand. I'll ask him once he gets back.”

“I'll leave it to you then.”

“I'm sorry that our Yuuji created trouble for sensei.”

After this conversation with the teacher, Yukino hung up the phone and started thinking through the reason behind the violence. The other party involved 3 upperclassmen, and Yuuji seemed to have taken them on himself, resulting in this fight.

“It doesn't seem like something he would do...”

Yuuji's really a smart child. Even when removing the bias of the parents, this fact still remains. This prodigy actually took on upperclassmen, 3 of them at that, and no matter what, Yukino felt incredulous about it. Even if Yuuji did beat them up because he hated those boys, with Yuuji's intelligence, he would plan to let himself win. At least that's what he would do.

“What exactly happened...”

So there should be a special reason why Yuuji would fight them himself.

“If that's the case, I do need to ask the truth from him...”

Thinking about that, Yukino got up to prepare tea and biscuits to calm her son down somewhat when she speaks to her son.

But at this moment--

“Ara?”

Ding dong—a sharp doorbell sound could be heard from the quiet living room. It seems that she has a guest.

“If that's the case. Please hold on...let me see...”

She wanted to see who pressed the bell through the indoor surveillance camera, but pressed the wrong button, and ended up turning the LCD completely black. If she pressed a few buttons, she should be able to see the image, but when the same thing happened the last time, she randomly pressed the buttons and caused the bell circuit to break down. If this happened again, her son would explode in anger.

“Sorry to keep you waiting. May I know who that is—eh?”

“...Aunty, I'm sorry...”

On opening the door, she found a little guest standing over there in front of her, looking really depressed.

“...Yuuji's really amazing.”

As the afternoon and evening went together, the boy and girl were sitting opposite each other in the empty classroom where no one else was at as they work on their homework.

“Don't say that now, Shouko, hurry up and finish this so that we can go home.”

Without looking at the girl, the boy—Yuuji, looked bored as he makes a guidebook for extra-curricular teaching.

“...But I want to talk to Yuuji.”

“I don't want to talk, I just want to finish this troublesome thing and hurry back home.”

“...I want to talk to Yuuji.”

“No.”

“...I want to talk to Yuuji.”

“No.”

“...I want to talk to Yuuji.”

“...”

Since he said that he didn't want to talk, Yuuji decided to ignore her.

“...Yuuji.”

“...”

No matter how Shouko called him, Yuuji didn't lift his head up as he just works on the assignment in his hands silently.

Shouko saw that she wouldn't be able to get the reply she wanted, so she decided to change her method.

“...Yuuji, listen to me.”

“...”

As expected, he continued to ignore Shouko and pretend not to see her or hear her.

“...My breasts' been growing slowly recently.”

BAM—Yuuji's head slammed against the table surface, causing a huge thud.

“WHY DID YOU JUST SAY SUCH A RIDICULOUS THING!”

“...Because Yuuji's been ignoring me. I just said something guys would be interested in.”

“I, I'M NOT INTERESTED! OKAY, HURRY UP AND FINISH YOUR WORK!”

“...I finished what I need to do. But I just want to talk to Yuuji.”

“Just talk to your friends then.”

“...Mn, that's what I'm doing now.”

“The friend you're referring to is me...?”

Yuuji revealed a 'can't bear with you' look at Shouko. The girl didn't hesitate at all when she told Yuuji that he's her friend as she looked by with a cute and radiant smile.

Seeing her like this, Yuuji couldn't help but think.

“What the heck. Recently, this person's...been livelier than before...”

He recalled the moment when she first transferred into Minazuki Primary school. She didn't smile at all. If she smiled like that from the beginning, she should be able to get along well with everyone.

After she transferred in, Shouko wasn't bullied, but she obviously attracted a lot of attention.

The presence she gave off was really different from the other students. She's always slow when talking, and unable to catch up to others in conversations. She's quiet, and gave others a gloomy image. Most importantly, in a certain sense, her presence was really exceptional.

That long black hair that didn't have any blemish and looked as soft as thread.

The long, narrow and beautiful eyes that reminded people of jade or a blue crystal.

She would be one heck of a beauty in the future. Right now, her slender and dazzling figure is already charming.

At this age, children would start to know more about their genders, so her existence alone undoubtedly made the other girls jealous of her, and it made this boy who's of the same age shy and scared.

5th and 6th graders will start to realize the differences between themselves and the surroundings. In other words, it's an age when they started going through puberty. Shouko, who's pretty, had a good heritage, brains and athleticism, has a wall against the students around her in terms of what's right and what's not right. If done well, this wall would make her like someone worth admiring as they will start to worship her. On the other hand, everyone will just treat her as a weirdo.

Unfortunately, the latter case seemed to happen to Shouko.

(Oh well. It has nothing to do with me anyways.)

At that time, Yuuji just treated her normally because 'I have no interest in this childish world', and unknowingly, Shouko began to get close to him. Both of them had outstanding grades and were class representatives for two consecutive years, and this may be one of the reasons why both of them got close together. Though Yuuji did feel that Shouko wanted to get close to him, he didn't really have too much feelings for her.

“...Yuuji, shall we talk?”

Yuuji couldn't feel any hint of malice from her, and at this moment, she's staring at Yuuji with eyes like a kid. Perhaps her naïve personality of being unable to understand ugly made her annoying to her fellow gender.

Rumors had it that before she transferred in, since 2 years ago, Shouko was studying in some noble girls school. Though people would have their prejudices, Yuuji felt that the ojou-samas would see themselves as superior. Letting such a girl stay in such a school would not create as much interaction as a normal school. Maybe that's the reason why she transferred to such a primary school...Yuuji hypothesized.

“...Yuuji?”

Seeing Yuuji suddenly became silent, Shouko tilts her head, not understanding what's going on.

Truthfully, it's troublesome to talk with Shouko, but if he ignored her, it'll be even troublesome if she mentioned that fatal topic.

Taking the lesser of the two evils, Yuuji decided to talk to her.

“Oh yeah. What did you say was amazing?”

“...Eh?”

“Didn't you say that I'm amazing or something?”

“...Ah, mn,. It's about the mock test just now.”

Yuuji's tone was really unfriendly, but Shouko didn't feel unhappy or angry with his attitude as she answered back like normal. In fact, Yuuji's tone was always cold, or rather he would be slightly gentler to Shouko. Yuuji's personality was so cold he wouldn't say more to people he's not interested in and ignore them.

“The mock exams aren't anything much.”

“...But you're only a fifth-graders, yet you could study better than middle school students. That's really amazing. Even those sixth grade senpai looked troubled.”

“I got a question wrong on social studies. I would have gotten first if I didn't get

that wrong.”

Shouko's studying at primary school level, and her ability was able to match middle schoolers. However, Yuuji was bothered that he could not get a first on a 'mere' middle school level exam. Shouko's learning ability wasn't bad, but it was vastly inferior to Yuuji's.

It's good to learn more, but Yuuji's superiority complex towards the rest was like what they said. Of course, his personality mostly annoyed the other students. Shouko's statement that the 'sixth grade senpai looked troubled' was an understatement, since they must be furious at Yuuji. If they find out that the arrogant boy who's one year younger in time looked down on them, they would be really fuming.

“That doesn't really matter anyway. Let's hurry and deal with them so that we can go home!”

Yuuji knocked twice on the pile of paper that's on the table and prompted Shouko. Shouko didn't stop, but asks,

“...Is there something today?”

“Nothing, nothing at all. It's just...if I go back too late, I'll be bothered by a few irritating guys.”

“...Irritating guys?”

“Don't worry too much. It's just some idiots who I don't need to remember about.”

Yuuji gave a look of disdain as he looked down on them.

“...I see.”

“Yeah. Really, if they have the time to envy, they should use that time to go back and study. But they won't beat me no matter how much they studied.”

Yuuji said arrogantly.

“...But more than that, I feel happier at school.”

“Huh? Happier at school? Are you talking about yourself?”

“...Un, is that weird?”

“It's not that it's weird...”

But it's really surprising that she would say that.

Like what Yuuji knew, even if there were some more people, Shouko didn't really have much friends. She wouldn't play with the other classmates enthusiastically, and didn't take part in any clubs, so what makes her like school?

Though not at Yuuji's level, Shouko was a really smart child. Thus, she realized what Yuuji was about to ask and calmly answered before he did.

“...Because no one would play with me at all, and no one would talk to me. My house's too big that it made me feel lonely...”

“You really don't know when enough's enough. Saying that your house's too wide, I'm rather envious about that.”

“...If that's the case, do you want to come to my house to play?”

Perhaps expecting something, Shouko looked up and asked Yuuji.

“No way. I'd rather study more than play with you, it's more meaningful that yet.”

But Yuuji's reply caused her to be unable to get closer, and she looked somewhat unhappy.

“...You're so bad.”

“Whatever you say.”

“...Petty kid.”

“Humph, so what.”

“...Yuuji likes me.”

“ACK ACK!”

Yuuji choked on his saliva.

Girls do mature earlier than guys in the psychological concept of like and hate, and Yuuji's no exception.

“...You like me, so you don't want to come to my house to play because you're shy.”

(...It's not just me. It'll be the same if you find other guys...)

The notion appeared in his mind, but boys at this age can't say such things.

“Why did you ask me to go to your house? Did something happen?”

Yuuji didn't take her taunt as he threw a question over. Now, Shouko's looking somewhat troubled.

“...It's not something that would happen immediately...”

“What do you mean by that? Explain clearly!”

“...Recently, grandpa's been talking about the 'Holy Ridge' Girls School.”

The school that Shouko mentioned was the name of the famous school that's affiliated to a university. Speaking of which, the students there were all children of financial players and politicians, a really famous school of nobility . They were said to accept rich students from the other states, and the student dorm that's situated behind that large and heavy entrance were often in short supply.

“Fuu, so your gramps want you to transfer over?”

“...He hasn't said that yet...but I guess so.”

“Ah, really.”

“...But, I don't want to transfer schools...”

Shouko looked somewhat melancholic. Yuuji, who wouldn't really pay too much attentions to other people's hearts, had a deep impression after seeing her

expression. He didn't know why she would like this school, but Shouko really looked like she wanted to continue staying here. Maybe...she just hates those rich girl schools.

“I see. So you want to bring a friend back to get rid of that thought.”

“...They often asked me whether I was bullied at school.”

“Because you always looked like you would be bullied easily. You wouldn't talk no matter what they did to you.”

Someone who backs away like her would always be viewed as someone who's easily bullied. It's understandable that Shouko's grandfather would be worrying about her situation in school.

But to what Yuuji knows, Shouko wasn't bullied. If she was really bullied, she wouldn't tell her family members no matter what. If she said it, she would have to transfer schools.

“...I finally managed to make friends other than Yuuji...”

“Then bring those guys back home to play with.”

“...I wasn't really on that good terms with them...”

“Humph, your answer's rather delicate.”

“...Mn.”

The introverted and quiet Shouko needed a lot of time to get along with everyone. Having finally quelled the troubles of transferring in and get along with her other classmates, Shouko's grandfather would want her to transfer schools. Yuuji felt that it was rather strange.

“Oh well. It doesn't involve me anyway. It doesn't matter to me even if you're going to transfer schools.”

“...You're too much.”

“No way.”

“...You're too much.”

“No way.”

“...You're too much.”

“No way.”

“...You're too much.”

“No way.”

“...You're too much.”

“No way.”

“...You're too much.”

“No way.”

“...You're too much.”

“No way.”

“.....Actually, my breasts are the largest in class.”

“ACK ACK!”

After that, Yuuji could only follow Shouko's pace, and by the time they finished their assignments, every other student in school had gone home.

It wasn't early now. Shouko, who normally wanted to talk with Yuuji until she reached Yuuji's house, went home directly, and Yuuji could only go back on his own alone. Just when he was thinking about the 'theory behind sound transmission', a few figures suddenly appeared in front of him.

“Oi, Sakamoto.”

One of the three boys who appeared said hello with a pressuring call.

Yuuji snorted and glanced at him before turning his eyes on the road back.

He avoided the boys like they're telegraph poles.

“Damn brat—ignoring us like that!”

“You arrogant brat!”

Thus, the other two people standing on both sides blocked off Yuuji's path.

Yuuji glared at them irritatedly and softly opened his mouth,

“What's wrong? I don't have time to hang around with you people.”

“SHUT UP! WHO ASKED YOU TO RETORT BACK!?”

“FOR A FIFTH-GRADER, YOU'RE REALLY COCKY!”

Haaa—Yuuji sighed.

It's not the first time he was stopped by his upperclassmen, but it didn't really happen a lot of times. But ever since the results of that mock exam were released, these people kept looking for him. Yuuji would continue to ignore them at the beginning, but after so many times, he really felt irritated by them.

“I say...what do you want to do? Are you lonely because you guys have no friends?”

Having been told off like this by Yuuji, who obviously didn't have many friends, how could those boys hold their anger in? As expected, the 3 upperclassmen were so angry that their faces were flushed red.

“DAMN YOU, BEHAVE YOURSELF!'

“KNOW YOUR PLACE! YOU'RE JUST ABLE TO STUDY BETTER, THAT'S ALL!”

“WE'RE SIXTH GRADERS! USE SOME HONORIFICS WHEN TALKING TO US!”

No matter how loud they spoke, they wouldn't go up to do anything to Yuuji. In the end, these three boys just looked like thugs, but they're just spineless cowards. Besides, they were just here to find trouble with Yuuji for having better grades than them, and they're not like delinquents.

Yuuji shrugged his shoulders in an exaggerated motion, and then continued,

“Honorifics? You're just idiots. Honorifics are 'terms that honor the person'. Is there anything I can give respect to you with if you people can't even do your homework well?”

He taunted them arrogantly.

“WHA—! WHAT DID YOU SAY!?”

“WE'RE UPPERCLASSMEN!”

The upperclassmen were even more agitated after Yuuji clearly told them 'your grades are worse then mine'. Yuuji continued to enact verbal revenge to remove the anger he didn't manage to vent up.

“It's because you're upperclassmen that I couldn't respect you further. You studied one year more than, but you lost to me, isn't it? Forget about being unable to respect you, you can't grumble even if I treat you as idiots. You should be the ones saying honorifics to me.”

“WHA, WHAT DID YOU SAY!!”

Being belittled like this, they could not remain silent. One of them was so angry he reached out and grabbed Yuuji by the collar.

Once he did that, Yuuji said something to shake their confidence.

“Oi, can you really beat me up? Sensei will notify your parents if something happened to me, because I'm a special student here.”

“Uu...”

Yuuji's words made the three boys tremble.

It's true. It wouldn't be wise to beat Yuuji up here. It was the same back, but after the results of the mock exam came out, those teachers treated Yuuji really differently. If they did anything to Yuuji, they will get a bad rep for their recommendation to school, and the scariest thing is that their parents will be notified.

“If you understand, scram. Also, don't appear in front of me again.”

Yuuji deliberately knocked his shoulder into them and continued on his way home. The 3 upperclassmen could only watch him leave dejectedly.

“That guy really infuriates me!”

“I really want to deal something to him!”

“If we can't wreck him up, at least mess his locker up!”

“Right! We'll do that!”

“We must teach him what 'respect' is!”

If they couldn't beat him up directly, they would wreck his stuff. Those childish thoughts were expected by Yuuji, the one called a prodigy. If he could catch them wrecking his stuff, he could punish them without being caught. Yuuji taunted them while expecting this, and those three didn't know that.

“I'm back.”

Yuuji opened the door and muttered. Even though Yuuji felt that this greeting was meaningless at all, he couldn't resist the notion of 'remembering to be polite, thank and greet others' his mother would emphasize all the time. Though she wouldn't be angry all if he didn't listen—she would look depressed and continue to nag at Yuuji.

“Welcome back, Yuuji. You came back really late today. Did you go to Shouko-chan's house to play?”

Dressed with an apron around her, Yukino came out to invite him in. That's what normally happens when Yuuji returns home.

“Why would I go play with her? That's ridiculous.”

“Ara, aren't you two friends?”

“No way.”

“Really. You're saying such things again...Shouko-chan will become a beauty in the future. It'll be too late the moment you say 'I should have treated her well like what mum said. I really didn't expect her to become a beauty like mom'.”

“Who would do that? Besides, you're not a beauty, mom.”

“Ahh, you're too much.”

Yukino puffed her cheeks unhappily, but she continued to maintain a casual presence. It's just that Yukino was pretending not to be concerned.

“I came back late today because I had to deal with the roles of being a monitor. I will be a little later tomorrow too, because I got to teach some upperclassmen a lesson.”

“Teach what to your upperclassmen?”

“A lot of things.”

Should I prepare a camera to take the scene of the crime? This notion appeared in his mind, but Yuuji immediately rejected it. By then, it will be too troublesome if anyone were to ask him why he brought a camera along, and it would be too much of a waste to use a camera on them. It would be easy to just call the teacher in after checking what they did. If his things were wrecked, he just need to ask them to pay up.

After deciding the course of action tomorrow. Yuuji raised the question he had on his mind up till now.

“Oh yeah, mom...”

“What is it?”

“Why are you wearing an apron...are you intending to cook dinner?”

“That's right. I'm making potato and meat stew. I just peeled the sweet potatoes.”

“WHY ARE YOU PEELING SWEET POTATOES WHEN YOU SAID YOU'RE GOING TO COOK POTATO AND MEAT STEW!”

“The last time I cooked it, the potato was cooked until it was so soft, so I chose the sweet potato s that's hard to cook.”

“FORGET ABOUT MESSING UP THE DISH, YOU ALREADY MESSED UP THE DEFINITION OF THE POTATO AND MEAT STEW DISH!!”

Though he retorted back, Yuuji muttered, 'Ahh, nevermind...it feels like it's edible this time...'. 'Habit' could really be a terrifying thing.

“Oh yeah, mom forgot to buy meat, so it's a potato and meat stew without meat~”

“YOU'RE JUST COOKING SWEET POTATOES!!!”

It's been 5 years since he started attending primary school, and this time was enough for Yuuji to understand the difference between his family and other people's families.

The next day, after school,

Waiting for the sixth graders to show up, Yuuji went to the library immediately after lesson and spent the time studying there. He intended to wait until the sixth graders finished their lessons and messed up the place before checking it out.

(Arre? Speaking of which, Shouko didn't follow me today...)

He thought as he walked towards the library.

Normally, Shouko would tell him to go home with her or talk together, and today, she didn't follow him. Something felt strange about that.

(Did she start to hang around with those people who became her friends recently...oh well, it doesn't matter.)

Yuuji didn't think that it would end up like that in one or two days, but he didn't think too deeply into it as he wasn't interested. Also, he had more important things to do, like making the upperclassmen suffer.

It doesn't matter if they didn't come over. Besides, it wouldn't benefit him anyway. However, Yuuji was thinking about letting them get retribution if they dared to come over to mess up the place.

(I hid my shoes the moment I came to school in the morning so that I won't get affected. But...did they detect my plan?)

If he were on the other side today, he should be able to tell what the other side's thinking about. Since he hid his shoes, the other people belongings had to be kept away. They would be idiots if they didn't discover them.

(Well, even if I could discover them, those guys probably wouldn't be able to do so. They're a bunch of idiots anyway.)

If he went all out, he can't possibly lose to an adult in terms of wits. Even though they're sixth graders, they're just primary school students, so they couldn't possibly match his intellect. Yuuji opened the door to the library as he imagined those guys being caught in the act and crying.

Normally, Shouko would use lots of excuses to stick with Yuuji and go back with him, but after everyone went back home today, she stayed alone in the classroom to do her assignment. Since she was talking to Yuuji so much yesterday, she didn't manage to finish her own guidebook.

She folded about 20 pieces of paper down the middle, put the cover over it, and stapled them together. After making one booklet, she lined some more papers to the corners and stapled them together. Shouko would follow the rules seriously and line each piece of paper together properly, and once all four corners were lined up properly, she would then file them up into a book. It looks inefficient to others, but Shouko liked this simple job.

Unlike Yuuji, who was able to finish the work while talking away, Shouko spent time and effort to finish it. It was already evening when the work was done, and it was about time for school to close.

Stretching the body that was stiff due to the continuous work, Shouko packed up the guidebooks. She carried the ones Yuuji did yesterday as well, and left the classroom to head to the office.

Shouko knocked on the heavy wooden door, and muttered 'excuse me' before entering the office. On seeing Shouko, the busy homeroom teacher stopped her work and stood up.

“...Sensei, the booklets, they're done.”

“Thank you.”

Shouko passed all the booklets to the homeroom teacher, who thanked her back courteously.

“...I'll be off first.”

After saying goodbye to the teacher courteously, Shouko went back to the classroom alone. Now, she just needed to pack her bag and go home. Since she couldn't say much to Yuuji today, she would say more the next day—While thinking about this, she heard voices from the classroom that's supposed to be empty.

“THAT DAMNED SAKAMOTO HID HIS OUTDOOR SHOES! THAT BASTARD!”

That was a a voice that was completely different from her classmates.

Feeling that this was weird, Shouko peeked in from the corridor.

“THAT GUY MUST BE BULLIED OFTEN THEN! SINCE HIS SHOES ARE GONE, SOMEONE MUST HAVE HIDDEN THEM SINCE HIS INDOOR SHOES WERE GONE IN THE MORNING!”

“Wouldn't it be too much to mess up his locker if that's the case?”

“IT'S ALRIGHT, IT'S ALRIGHT! WHO ASKED THAT BASTARD TO BE SUCH A TWAT!?”

“THAT'S RIGHT! IT'S TO EDUCATE OUR JUNIORS!”

There were three boys making a ruckus. They looked strong, and she had never seen them before. Thus, Shouko guessed that they would be sixth graders.

But why would sixth graders appear in a fifth-grader's classroom?

Without realizing that Shouko was looking with doubts in her mind, they pulled out something from their pockets.

“LET'S JUST WRITE THINGS FULL OF BAD STUFF ABOUT HIM!”

“HOW ABOUT, HE CHEATED IN ALL HIS EXAMS!?”

“OOH—! THAT'S NOT TOO BAD!”

They took out an oil-based marker, and the targets were a notebook and sports attire from the locker.

(Ah...? Tha, that's from Yuuji's locker...)

The locker that was opened was undoubtedly Yuuji's. In other words, they wanted to bully Yuuji.

Something bad will be done to her friend. Thinking about this, Shouko couldn't

remain silent even when knowing that they're upperclassmen.

“...Tha, that...”

She walked into the classroom and summoned her courage to speak up.

Thus, all the upperclassmen knew that someone was at the scene of the crime, and trembled. They turned to look at Shouko.

“Who are you?”

A boy said menacingly.

Shouko didn't dare to look at him in the eyes as she lowered her head and protested softly.

“...Tha, that's Yuuji's, stuff...don't, do that to him...”

She said that so softly that it didn't sound like a warning. To Shouko, this was a warning that she could muster with all her strength, but it was too weak to control a group of boys who were older than her.

“What do you want?”

“It has nothing to do with you, right?”

Facing Shouko's feeble resistance, the boys said that even forcefully.

“...But, Yuuji will be pitiful if you vandalize his things, and also...”

“AND WHAT!?”

“...Yuuji's my friend, so it does involve me...”

Shouko said that with a faint voice.

There's no other meaning to these words,

But it didn't feel the same to these boys.

That guy's a lowerclassman, yet he could study and had lots of privileges from

the teachers. He's unlike us though. He has no friends.

That's the one advantage the boys thought they had over Yuuji.

But this girl in front of them declared herself to be Yuuji's friends. She was trembling so hard, yet she stepped forward to advise them against doing so. That girl had a stunningly pretty face, and she looked like a pushover. The 3 growing boys realized that besides friends, it's important to have someone of the opposite gender who they can view as an important part of their lives'. This fact made them feel really inferior.

“Oi! Ignore this girl and hurry up!!”

“That's right! Finish the job properly!”

The boys turned from Shouko and looked at Yuuji's belongings. One of the boys took off the marker and aims the marker point at the PE shirt on the table as he gets ready to draw all over it.

“Sto, stop!”

Shouko couldn't ignore the prank that's to be done in front of her, and subconsciously reached her arms out to stop his hand.

“St, stop bothering us!”

“No...Yuuji will be really pitiful...!”

She continued to grab onto the boy's hands that were trying to shake her off.

If anyone else in class knew of it, they might just say 'it's not like they did any damage'. Of course, Shouko doesn't want to see Yuuji hurt, but she didn't want to see Yuuji getting used to it until he doesn't bother with it.

“OI, LET GO!”

“ARE YOU DONE YET!”

“...Uu!!”

The other two boys moved forward to grab Shouko and pull her off. But even so,

Shouko continued to hang on as she continued to try and protect Yuuji's personal belongings.

Those boys who wanted to vandalize Yuuji thoroughly seem like they were willing to take action on the girl as they tugged at her.

“This twerp's really annoying!”

The one who finally broke the balance of power were the boys, who won the power struggle. A boy wrapped his arm under Shouko's armpit and opened her chest wide open to restrain her—her hands being held up.

“Haa...haaa...go, mess her...”

The boy holding the marker was finally released, and took a deep breath.

And then, he subconsciously looked down at his own body to check the state he was in, and the white shirt that was dirtied became quite an atrocious sight.

“WHAT! HOW DO YOU INTEND TO REPAY ME NOW!? LOOK! MY SHIRT'S ALL MESSED UP ALREADY!”

The hand holding the marker and the elbow were okay, as they could be washed off since they're oil-based. However, the trails on the shirt would be bad. He couldn't possibly wear this shirt again.

“That...wasn't my fault...!”

Shouko glared at him and forcefully tried to break off.

“You twerp...FINE! I'LL LET YOU EXPERIENCE HAVING YOUR SHIRT VANDALISED TOO!!”

After saying those words, the boy moved the marker near Shouko's shirt.

“THEN I'LL DRAW ALL SORTS OF THINGS ON YOUR SHIRT LIKE THAT SAKAMOTO!”

“THAT'S RIGHT! LET'S DO THIS!”

The boys' enthusiasm and arrogance went up a notch once they robbed her of her

freedom.

To the boys, it was just vandalism, just a little act on others.

“Do, don't do this...”

But to Shouko right know, it couldn't be just treated as a little vandalism.

It wouldn't matter if it was just a few streaks of the marker lines, since she could find an excuse. However, it would be different if it were an all out vandalism. Once they draw some pictures on the clothing, it means that the stains on the clothes weren't an accident, and the outcome—would be the best proof that Shouko was bullied at school. No matter how hard Shouko tried not to avoid it, she would have to transfer schools.

“Don't...”

Shouko kept trying to curl her body up, but still couldn't avoid the marker tip that was closing in on her.

At this moment, the marker was even scarier than a knife.

“I...I DON'T WANT TO TRANSFER SCHOOLS!”

Yuuji quickly walked back to the classroom.

The reason why he did so was because he was so engrossed with the book he randomly picked up in the library, and accidentally forgot the time.

(That book was really interesting. Anyone other than me would have found it hard to understand that book.)

Yuuji recalled the contents of the book he was still reading just now as he moved forward. The theory that lightspeed doesn’t change, but that time changed; such a theory was really interesting. Also, what intrigued him more was that the content couldn’t be understood by anyone other than himself.

From an adult’s viewpoint, this is a proof of a kid enjoying himself, but Yuuji’s immature mind wasn’t able to realize that.

(Then, did those guys mess up my locker properly?)

He immediately changed his thoughts on seeing his own classroom.

He would check the situation out before calling the teacher over. He would check if they messed the place up before that though, as he would be looking for trouble if he didn’t check it before bringing the teacher over.

He softened his footsteps and looked into the classroom from afar. He couldn’t see what was going on inside, but he could hear voices.

(Those guys sure are idiots. Well, blame them for choosing the wrong target.)

Yuuji was grinning after seeing that his plan was a success. He was 99% certain that the plan was a success, but for precaution, he went to check for evidence to see if there was anything that could be used as evidence, so he approached the classroom further.

And then, he looked into the classroom—and something totally unexpected happened in front of him.

“OI, LET GO!”

“ARE YOU DONE YET!”

“...Uu!!”

Shouko was curled up as she tried her best to protect something. The familiar 3 upperclassmen surrounded her and roughened her hair and grabbed her arms. She just looked bullied out there.

(Eh? Eh? What’s going on? What happened?)

This completely unexpected situation stunned Yuuji.

Yuuji had never seen Shouko being bullied by anyone, and neither did he hear anything about her having a problem with those three. However, the trio who had nothing to do with Shouko at all were definitely bullying the weak her.

The only connection she had with them was,

(Is...is it because of me? Is Shouko being bullied because of me?)

Yuuji did not know how this happened. Is it because Shouko saw them pulling that prank and went out to stop them? Or is it because Shouko met them over something trivial and got into a quarrel with them? Or is it because of something else?

However, the only undisputed fact was already right in front of him--Shouko got involuntarily involved in the personal squabble between Yuuji and the 3 sixth-graders, and was a victim because of it.

(I, I have to save her!)

The childish sense of responsibility and justice prompted Yuuji, who only thought about trying to help the girl who was being bullied in front of him as fast as possible. *I want to save her like an anime hero in a cool and suave manner! Those guys are all idiots, and I'm the smart one here, the most special one here. I'm different from them. There's no need to be scared.*

There's no need to be scared.

(Ugh...uu...mm...)

But Yuuji could not take that step forward.

The only thought he had was that they could not beat him even if they ganged up on him. But at this moment, he needed powerful arm strength to beat the enemies instead of a mind that could accurately seek out an answer. He was just a fifth grader, and the trio were older than him. The difference between those two sides was obvious.

(Yes, that's right! I just need to call in a teacher!)

It was different from what he predicted, but this was definitely a bullying case. If

he reported it to a teacher, those guys would become bad kids, and he would get his objective. Wouldn't that be what he wanted?

Yuuji thought about this, and got ready to storm towards the staff room.

(Wait...but if I do this...what'll happen to Shouko?)

The sixth graders who were bullying would be brought to the staff room, and told off by their parents once they returned home, which was fine. However, what would happen to Shouko who was bullied?

(If I report it to the teacher, the school will also contact her parents. In that case...)

In that case, perhaps Shouko's parents would know that she was bullied at school? Then, even if Shouko doesn't want to transfer schools, she would be forced to do so. No matter how much she tries to explain that this was all a coincidence, and that she had never been bullied on other schools before, Shouko's family would definitely not believe this. To Shouko, she would rather avoid having this situation develop instead of being bullied.

In other words, if he called the teacher here, it would force Shouko into despair.

(Wha, what should I do? What am I expected to do here!?)

There’s a girl who’s bullied because of him.

If he ran out to call for help just to save her, she will end up being hurt.

But even if he went alone to save her, his opponents were three upperclassmen. In contrast, he was alone, and a lowerclassmen who have never fought before. The outcome of the battle could already be seen.

(Wh…why did it end up like this? I just wanted to take revenge on them!)

Even if he called the teacher here, it wouldn't change the fact that he caused Shouko to be bullied.

But if he didn't do so and leave while pretending like nothing happened, the strong guilt would continue to torment his conscience.

And even if he used all his strength to stop them, he would be beaten up.

No matter what he chose, he couldn't retreat completely, and there would be an emotional or physical scar.

His mind was in a completely blank slate. The normally logical reasoning of his couldn't operate at all. Yuuji wanted to cover his head, squat down, not look and ignore it.

(What should I do...someone...someone save me!) A weak begging cry could be heard in his mind.

Actually, Yuuji already knew that if there was only one correct choice, it would be to summon his courage and take the first step forward. However, fear distracted him, forcing him to be unable to make the correct decision.

(Damn it, those guys are sixth graders. Three of them…I can’t beat them on my own!)

Would he be beaten up by them? Would he be walloped by them? Would he cry because of the pain? Yuuji’s mind started to imagine tragic things, causing him to tremble. Thinking it through, even if he rushed forward, there wouldn’t be any benefit at all.

But while thinking about that, another thought crept into Yuuji’s mind.

(Why must I be scared here!? Shouko’s being bullied because of me! I should be taking responsibility for that! Why am I thinking about those useless things here!)

This was the first time Yuuji felt so ashamed of himself. Whether it’s the hero of anime or the male lead in a manga, none of them would be looking so ridiculous. Even though they knew that they couldn’t beat the enemy, they would leap into danger without hesitation just to save the girl. But right now, he could only stand outside and tremble. He was actually trembling in the face of those idiots he looked down on, rooted to the spot. He was, he was the one who caused that girl in front of him to be bullied.

Thinking more into it, he found himself pitiful, shameful, belittled. His intellect

would only bring him to that level. Right now, in front of him, he had something he had to do, something he had to be angry about, something he had to fight for, but yet his mind was confused, thinking about everything else. Was that his so-called intellect? If that's true—wouldn't the stupid guy who doesn't think and get angry when appropriate be the cooler person to him?

Yuuji bit his lower lip so forcefully until tears were about to come out from his eyes, yet he just stood there, unable to take the initial step.

Just when Yuuji was having that internal conflict inside his head, there seemed to be a new development to this incident.

"Don't…"

Shouko's feeble cry entered his ears.

As he was hiding, Yuuji didn't really understand what was going on in the classroom. He just saw a boy spreading Shouko wide open from behind, and another one boy with his arm out at her chest.

At this moment, Yuuji suddenly remembered what Shouko said the day before. Shouko did mention that her breasts grew. Would there be a prank of that kind happening?

(She's a girl. There'll be emotional scars on her if they really did that!)

Children at this age would only vaguely understand things about the opposite gender, so Yuuji didn't know how much emotional damage it would cause to the girl.

(Just call for help, Shouko! I'll get sensei to save you once you shout for help!)

Once Shouko's willing to call for help, it'll be what she wanted. At that point, Yuuji just needed to get the teacher to solve the problem. Then, Yuuji wouldn't lose anything. Even if she were to be forced to transfer, it would be her mistake in making such a decision, and it wouldn't be Yuuji's fault.

People forced into desperation would often come up with some ridiculous

reasoning.

(So what about transferring schools? At least it’s better than being hurt…so just hurry up and call for help!)

Yuji kept waiting for Shouko to voice out.

Just one sentence, one magic spell that could save him and Shouko. Once she said it, he would be freed, and he would be freed once he heard it.

Trying to run away from the guilt and terror, Yuuji continued to wait for that sentence to pop out. A ‘save me’, a ‘somebody’, anything would do. Anyway, he just hoped for her to call for a third party—especially an adult—to interfere. He would rather have her choose this, since he preferred her to transfer out than to be bullied.

Yuuji just kept wishing, wishing and wishing…

And then, Shouko finally opened her mouth,

“I...I DON'T WANT TO TRANSFER SCHOOLS!”

“Oh, OHHHHHHHHHHHH WHAT ARE YOU DDOOOOIINNNNGGG!!!”

That voice made Shouko doubt her ears.

The owner of that voice shouldn’t be here. He shouldn’t be here to save her. Even if he’s here, it shouldn’t be him.

The person overturned all these possibilities that shouldn’t have happened; the most important friend to Shouko stood up for her to save her.

“WH, WHO IS IT!?”

The boys all then looked over. They looked so awkward, probably because they thought of the possibility that it could be a teacher.

Thanks to this unexpected passer-by, the force holding onto Shouko relaxed.

“…u!!”

In that moment, Shouko shook her hands off and got away. But to the boys, it seems like it doesn’t matter even if Shouko got away now.

“The, THERE ARE THINGS THAT CAN BE DONE AND THINGS THAT CAN’T BE DONEEE!! YOU GUYS ARE THE WORST!!!”

That’s a shout from Yuuji that was never heard before, and it was loud and trembling. It’s hard to imagine this Yuuji in front of them shouting with such a panicked tone.

“Wh, what, so it’s Sakamoto.”

“I thought that sensei was here……you scared me, you punk!”

“Oh, just nice of you to be here. We were looking for you.”

The boys got arrogant after knowing that Yuuji came alone. The excitement they had in the little scuffle is now overwhelmed by the superiority they feel as they threatened him.

“I…have nothing to say to you.”

Yuuji got overwhelmed by their presence, and his voice got softer.

Even though they’re not so bad that they can be called delinquents, the three boys were neither cowards nor kind folks. They won’t back away after seeing a lowerclassmen.

“You don’t, but we do.”

“You’re too haughty, twit.”

The three of them closed in on Yuuji to prevent him from escaping.

“I’m busy…we’ll finish it off next time. Let’s go, Shouko.”

Yuuji muttered and walked over to grab Shouko on the hand, wanting her to leave.

“I TOLD YOU TO HOLD IT THERE!”

An upperclassman grabbed Yuuji forcefully on the shoulder, and the other two boys stretch their arms wide to prevent Yuuji from escaping. Now that their prey came over while they’re all excited, the boys wouldn’t let him go easily.

“What? I’m busy here…oi!”

Yuuji wanted to swing that arm aside, but the boy wasn’t so weak as to be pushed aside with just one hand. He was finally shoved aside with both hands, but the other two boys blocked his exit. He couldn’t escape no matter what.

Yuuji stood in front of Shouko to hide her behind, and whispered to her without looking back.

“Shouko, you…go back.”

“…But.”

“GO BACK!”

Yuuji shouted with a trembling voice. Shouko was so shook up to the core, and she found Yuuji’s fist shaking as well.

“Yu, Yuuji…”

“JUST LEAVE ME ALONE AND GO BACK! YOU’LL ONLY MAKE TROUBLE FOR ME HERE!!”

Yuuji gritted his teeth and shouted out the thoughts in his mind. It wasn’t just his

voice and hands trembling, as the terror of the three bigger and stronger upperclassmen struck Yuuji, causing his entire body to tremble.

“…I, I’ll call sensei here—”

“SHUT UP! JUST HURRY UP AND GO BACK!!”

Yuuji knew how Shouko wished to stay in this school, and he knew what Shouko’s grandfather would do if this situation was voiced out. Since it happened, he couldn’t let Shouko call the teacher over.

Also, more than that—Shouko kept resisting, yet if Yuuji was only worried about himself and let her call the teacher over, it would end with her transferring schools, and that would be too embarrassing and ugly of him. He doesn’t have the right to cover his head and tremble because ‘Shouko got bullied’.

Cowering in fear of the upperclassmen he looked down on, and being pitied by the girl he should be saving; these were enough to crush Yuuji’s cockiness yesterday completely.

The complaint came from Yuuji’s stammering mouth—or rather, it would be an apology to Shouko who got involved in this.

“I…I was able to study well, so, I thought I wouldn’t lose to adults, I thought I was someone amazing…”

“…Yuu—ji…”

“But it wasn’t like that…no matter how much I studied, how many foreign languages I learnt, I’ll still be afraid, scared that I’ll be beaten by these guys who’re doing such things…!”

Shouko couldn’t see Yuuji’s expression from her direction, but she noticed the water droplets dripping down Yuuji’s face.

He could only stand down there and imagine his destiny of being beaten down by them, let alone protect the girl beside him. Yuuji could only grit his teeth with regards to that inevitable outcome and his own uselessness.

Seeing Yuuji like that, Shouko forced herself to hold back her own tears and

answered back.

“…Un…, …I, I’ll be…going…first…”

Most likely, Yuuji didn’t want to let others see him get beaten down like that. He probably didn’t want to admit being beaten to a pulp, crying, rolling on the floor like that. Shouko held back the frustration of having to leave Yuuji behind and running away, and escaped the classroom as what Yuuji had told her to do.

“U…uu…UWAAAAAAHHHH—!!”

Running away from Yuuji, who screamed and cried as he attacked, Shouko’s tears continued to fall.

“Welcome back, Yuuji.”

Like usual, Yukino welcomed Yuuji back once he got home.

“…”

Yuuji wordlessly took his shoes off and stepped into the house.

Yukino stared silently at her son, who didn’t explain anything, and asked.

“The school called…you had a fight with the upperclassmen?”

Yukino’s words made Yuuji stop.

“Did something happen?”

“…Nothing…nothing at all.”

Yuuji answered without looking back.

“Something did happen, right? You actually fought with your upperclassmen.”

“I just didn’t like those guys, so I beat them up. No special reason, none.”

He repeated the same reason he said at school. The teachers at school were asking ‘did something happen’ and ‘they beat you up first, right’, but Yuuji just continued to stubbornly answer ‘I beat up them because I just didn’t like them’. The sixth graders didn’t deny that too. Though the teachers were wondering what the sixth graders were doing in a fifth grader’s classroom, but since the person involved himself kept repeating the same answer, they couldn’t pursue the matter further. This incident could only be treated as a scandal caused by Yuuji, a scandal of a model student that removed any possibility of him being recommended to a famous school.

“They irritated you…is that why you fought?”

“Yeah, so!?”

“Mommy thinks that this isn’t good.”

“…”

Ignoring those words, Yuuji wordlessly went up to his own room upstairs.

Yuuji only managed to land a punch at the beginning, and then he was beaten badly. Of course, he couldn’t say that, and it was only because of a teacher walking by coincidentally that he was saved. He didn’t say anything once he was brought to the classroom. Of course, he didn’t say anything about what happened before the fight as well.

“Hey, Yuuji, wait. I haven’t—”

“SHUT UP! I JUST BEAT THEM UP BECAUSE I FOUND THEM ANNOYING! THERE’S NO OTHER REASON!’

“Ah, Yuuji.”

He grumbled as he ran up the stairs, and then, a loud slam of the door could be heard.

“So you beat them up because they irritated you, is it…”

She repeated what her son just said. The words that should have only ill intent in them were etched on her mind.

“…Aunty…”

Realizing that Yuuji wasn’t around, Shouko walked out from the living room. Yukino told her not to appear in front of Yuuji.

“I’m sorry for making you hear mother and son quarrel, Shouko-chan.”

“…Unun. It was, because of me…”

“Ara, Yuuji didn’t say that. He just said that ‘I beat them up because those guys irritated me’,”

“…But it’s because Yuuji was protecting me. Yuuji—”

“Un. I understand. You already told me what really happened, Shouko-chan.”

Shouko ran out of the classroom, found the school’s number at a public phone booth, made an anonymous call to the office, and came to Yuuji’s house to explain what Yuuji really did.

“…Aunty. Why didn’t Yuuji tell you what really happened? He saved me…Yuuji will be treated as a bad guy…”

Perhaps considering Yuuji’s future, Shouko’s expression darkened.

But as a mother, Yukino said to Shouko without any malice,

“I think it’s best for that child.”

“…Best…but, he’ll be a bad guy…? He finally managed to earn the praises of the teachers, got recommended to Shimozuki Middle school…he won’t have them now, right…?”

“U~n…perhaps that might happen.”

“…Wou, wouldn’t Yuuji be, sad or something…?”

“I don’t really know about that, because that’s a choice that kid did after thinking it through. As a mother, I can only pretend not to know anything.”

Perhaps Yukino might have seemed cruel to Shouko as they had different reasoning, but Yukino’s expression was completely different from what she said —it was a kind expression anyone could comprehend.

“…? Yuuji couldn’t go Shimozuki Middle School anymore, but aunty looks so happy…”

“Yes. I’ve never been so proud of being that kid’s mother like today. I’m happier about that rather than having a kid who can study.”

Yukino gave a bright smile. Rather than having full marks for an exam, first in a national mock exam, the scandal today made Yukino more proud than ever.

“…Yuuji’s…so kind…”

Not making any excuses for anyone, Shouko murmured to herself.

‘’Yuuji protected me.’’

‘’He couldn’t fight, he suffered, he was treated as a bad guy, yet he did that all to protect me. He even lied to his mother for that cause.’’

On thinking about this, a gradually expanding emotion grew up inside her.

“…excuse me, aunty.”

“What is it, Shouko-chan?”

“…I want to be Yuuji’s bride when I grow up.”

“Ara ara, that’s too early.”

“…I’ll definitely, definitely make him happy.”

“Fufu, that’s something Yuuji should be saying to Shouko-chan, right?”

“…That’s not true.”

“Then, I hope that Yuuji would say that to Shouko-chan one day. Aunty will cheer you on.”

“…Really?”

“That’s right. As long as Shouko-chan won’t hate Yuuji, right?”

Once Yukino asked that, Shouko again confirmed her own feelings. Would her feelings for Yuuji cool one day? Would she lose her feelings for this boy who protected her while trembling and crying? She continued to ask herself.

And then, she told the answer she got clearly to Yukino.

“…No problems. I will love him forever, definitely.”

That’s—a firm belief that could be a prophecy of her own heart.

Author's Notes

Thank you for picking up this book; I am the author of this novel, Inoue Kenji.

Without knowing it, this series has already reached its eighth volume. I really didn't expect to be able to come this far! To all of you who have accompanied me on this journey, I thank you. I promise to continue working hard from now on!

On a side note, the pages given for the afterword aren't much, so I apologize for not being able to talk much this time. Although, I do have much to say to thank everyone, as well as many interesting day-to-day encounters to share! It’s a pity I can’t, but please allow me to at least write the title of what I had actually intended to share this time.

«Inoue Kenji VS Moving Company's Onee-san

~ Allow me to explain the contents of the box ~ »

That’s not it! This is a misunderstanding! It’s not that there is any H-stuff in there. It’s just that… well, there’re many reasons…

I’d like to explain it in detail, but regrettably, there’re not enough pages, so I guess I’ll have to find some other time to do so… If only I could have about 10 pages for the afterword…

Well, let’s leave that aside and talk about the more important matters.

As this may include spoilers, I’d like to suggest those who haven’t read this volume yet to not read this first.

First of all is an important note.

Please take a look at the page 128, Fumizuki News Column’s «Himeji Mizuki’s

3-Minute Cooking Lesson»

With regards to the above recipe, I urge all to never attempt it.

When talking about strong digestive organs, we usually associate it with the ‘iron stomach’ expression. Regardless, even if the stomach is really made of iron, this dish would, without any hesitations, melt that piece of iron. Though this may be a solution to over-eating or indigestion, please consider this matter carefully. Minor ailments, like over-eating and indigestion, are completely incomparable to something as priceless as life. Also, although adding sulfuric acid to starch does result in hydrolysis, one cannot simply take matters as such. If you want it sweet, please just settle it with sugar, which would be enough. Similarly, if you want it sour, add lemon juice, not chloro-acetic acid! There is completely no need to ignore easily obtainable ingredients from the supermarket, and substitute it with dangerous chemicals. In the first place, meat does not need to be sour! In addition, it is equally dangerous to add sulfuric acid into food, even as a preservative. Should there be a need, just put it into a vacuum container and put it in the freezer. Beef and Potato Stew, transcending the laws of nature, releasing pink or green gases, are better known as ‘biochemical weapons’ in the 3-dimensional world. Saying that “I am only making Beef and Potato Stew” after the neighbours have called the police would only warrant psychological test during the trial. Therefore, I ask all to never attempt it.

Continuing on, is the explanation for the short stories.

Though I have discussed with the editor-in-charge during the planning stages, during then, he told me “it’s also okay for me to try writing more freely”.

Therefore, while drowning in this happiness and freedom, I ended up with the cruel reality of writing about cross-dressing in three of the four stories. What? Just which way does this Inoue Kenji swing? No matter what, please do not think that I have misunderstood the meaning of the word ‘freedom’.

The past between Yuuji and Shouko… I apologize for not writing it with the usual idiotic style. I would feel honoured if those who are unused to it were to take it as an end of volume appendix.

Well, well, before I noticed, I was only left with a few lines. Then, it shall be the usual customary thanks, my apologies for it being slightly simple. Haga-sensei in charge of the illustrations, N-sama in charge of editing, Kagaya-san in charge

of the ideas as well as a certain reader, thank you, it’s been tough on you all this while. Although all of my tributes have always been like this, but my feelings are, without a shred of pretension, filled with gratitude. Then, I will still be in the care of everyone here from now on!

Then, let us meet again next time on the stage of Baka Test!

アトガキ
2004.08
浴衣に水着、夏は華やかな絵が増える季節です。
今回は描いてるこちらも夏なんですよね。
あれ…水着も浴衣も着てないヨ？（´・ω・`）

Notes

1. ↑ Yasunari Kawabata. Renowned Japanese Author.
2. ↑ Himitsu means secret, starts with Hi, like Hi-deyoshi
3. ↑ The Japanese driver licenses have different grades for different vehicles. Please use wikipedia if you are interested to know. Too lazy to post it =P.
4. ↑ Seiza is a proper method of sitting in Japanese culture, but kneeling in water is...well.
5. ↑ I'm really looking forward to seeing you again. Are you prepared to die, Aki?
6. ↑ Butterflies are symbols of death. Umineko anyone?
7. ↑ Yuuji deliberately speaks in katakana to act like 'he' can only speak in broken Japanese here.